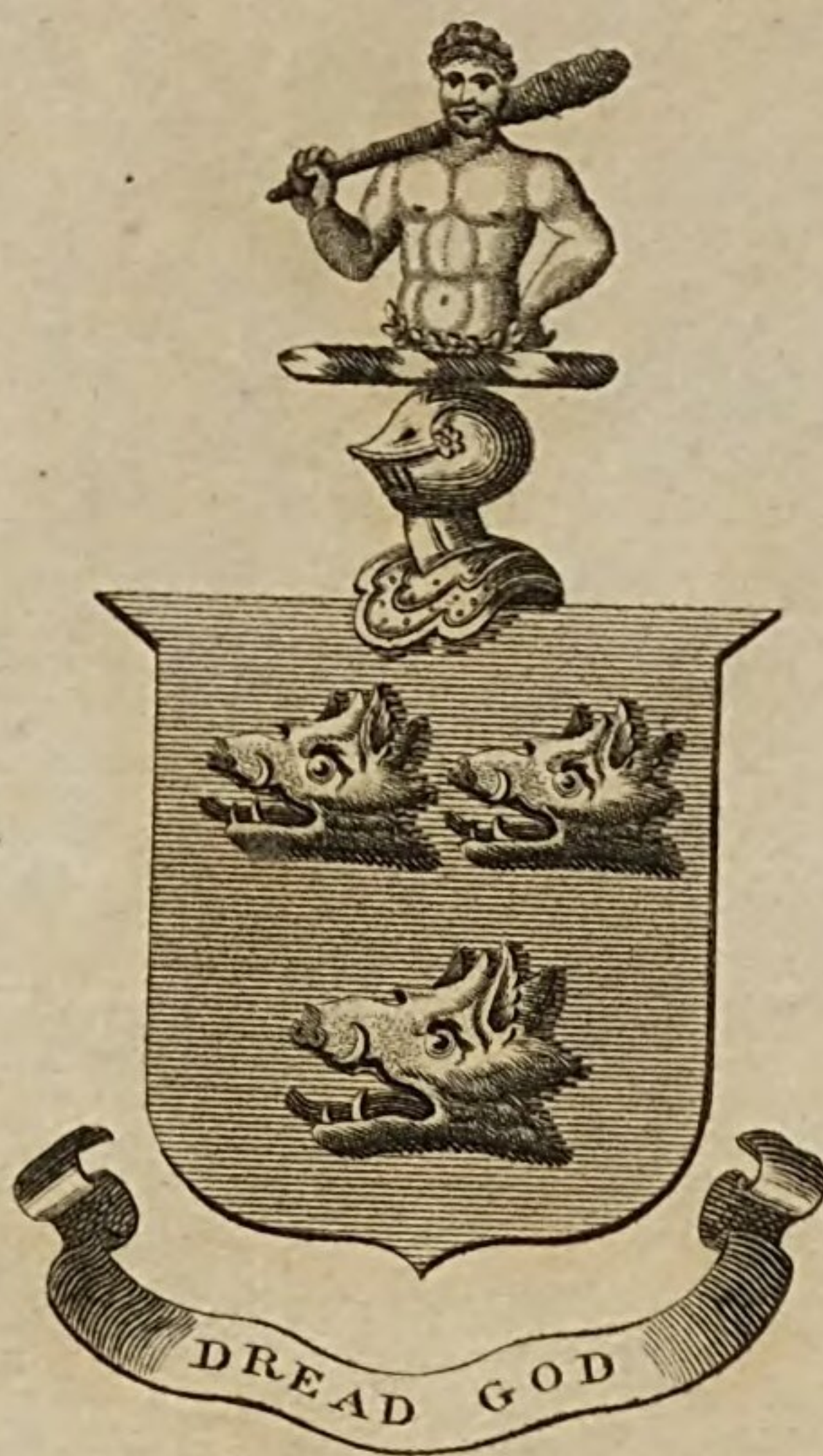




CAPT^N. GORDON,
Royal Navy.

Th. hom.

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THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE FIRST LESSONS

AT MORNING MEETING BETWEEN SEPTEMBER

AND OCTOBER

1880

BY THE REV. J. H. W.

OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY

NEW YORK

1880

NEW YORK

NEW YORK

NEW YORK

A
POPULAR COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE,

IN A SERIES OF

S E R M O N S,

FOLLOWING, IN

THE OLD TESTAMENT,

THE COURSE OF

THE FIRST LESSONS

AT MORNING AND EVENING SERVICE ON SUNDAYS.

DESIGNED FOR

Parish Churches,

OR FOR

READING IN PRIVATE FAMILIES.

BY

JAMES PLUMPTRE, B.D.

VICAR OF GREAT GRANSDEN, HUNTINGDONSHIRE,

HONORARY MEMBER OF THE LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF SHEFFIELD; AND FORMERLY
FELLOW OF CLARE HALL, CAMBRIDGE.

What the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak. 1 KINGS xxii. 14.

Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. EZEKIEL ii. 7.

Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

MATTHEW xiii. 52.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR C. AND J. RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD,
AND WATERLOO-PLACE, PALL-MALL.

1827.

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ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.



What the Lord will, we will do, and we will live. I know not what the future holds, but I know that the Lord will do what he pleases. I know not what the future holds, but I know that the Lord will do what he pleases. I know not what the future holds, but I know that the Lord will do what he pleases.

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Since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways: behold thou art wroth: for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved. But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away . . . 425

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LUKE xxiv. 27.

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unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself Page
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Temple of Jerusalem

Year of Israel
Year of Rome

A CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE
OF THE
PRINCIPAL EVENTS RECORDED IN THE BIBLE.

COMPILED CHIEFLY FROM CALMET, SCOTT, AND HORNE.

The true date of the Birth of Christ is *four years before* the common æra, or A.D.

CHRONOLOGY TO VOLUME II. OF THIS WORK.

*Continuation of Period VI.—From the Building of the**Kings of Judah.*

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
2 Kings viii. 18—24. 2 Chron. xxi. 4—20.	Jehoram at the importunity of his wife Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, introduces the worship of Baal into Judah.	3116	888
	Jehoram smitten by God with an incurable distemper in his bowels	3117	887
	Jehoram makes his son Ahaziah, viceroy, or associate in his kingdom. Jehoram dies having reigned 4 years..	3118	886
2 Chr. xxii. } 1—9. }	Ahaziah reigns but one year	3119	885
	Joash, or Jehoash, born.		
	Homer, the Greek poet, flourishes....		
2 Kings ix. 16 27	Ahaziah accompanies Jehoram, king of Israel to the siege of Ramoth Gilead.	3120	884
2 K. xi. 1—3 2 Ch. 9—12	Ahaziah slain by Jehu. Athaliah kills all the royal family; usurps the kingdom. Jehoash is preserved and kept secretly in the temple 6 years.		
2 K. xi. 4—20 2 Chron. xxiii.	Jehoiada the high priest sets Jehoash on the throne of Judah, and slays Athaliah.	3126	878
	Jehoash reigns 40 years.		
2 Ch. xxv. 1. 2 Kings xii. 4—16. }	Amaziah, son of Jehoash, born	3140	864
2 Chr. xxiv. } 4—14. }	Jehoash repairs the temple	3147	857
15, 16	Zechariah, the high priest, son of Jehoiada, killed in the temple by order of Jehoash.	3164	840
23, 24	Hazael, king of Syria, wars against Jehoash.		

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

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Kings of Israel.

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
2 Kings i. 2 Ch. xxii. 1—9	Ahaziah, falling from the lattice of his house, is dangerously hurt, and dies. Jehoram his brother succeeds him, and makes war against Moab.	3108	896
2 Kings ii.	Elijah taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire.		
iii.	Elisha foretells victory to the army of Israel, and procures water in abundance.	3109	895
v	He heals Naaman's leprosy.		
vi. vii	Samaria besieged by Benhadad, king of Syria. He and his army seized with a panic, flee during the night.	3119	885
viii. 7—13	Elisha, going to Damascus, foretells the death of Benhadad, and the reign of Hazael.	3120	884
28, 29	Jehoram marches with Ahaziah against Ramoth-gilead; is dangerously wounded and carried to Jezreel.		
ix. 14—37. x. 36.	Jehu rebels against Jehoram; kills him. Jehu reigns 28 years.		
2 Kings x. 35, 36. xiii. 1—9	Jehu dies, Jehoahaz his son, succeeds him. Reigns 17 years.	3148	856

Kings of Judah.

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
2 Ch. xxiv. 23	Hazael returns against Jehoash, and forces large sums from him.	3165	839
25—27	Jehoash dies.		
2 K. xiv. 1—6	Amaziah succeeds, who reigns 29 years		
7	Amaziah wars against Idumea	3177	827
8—15	Amaziah wars against Jehoash, king of Israel; is defeated by him.	3178	826
	Uzziah, or Azariah, son of Amaziah, born		
17—20	Amaziah dies	3194	810
21	Uzziah, or Azariah, succeeds. Reigns 52 years.		
2 Ch. xxvi. } 2 K. xv. 1—7 } Isaiah i. 1. }	<i>Isaiah</i> prophesies in Judah, under this reign, chapters I to V.		
Amos i. 1	<i>Amos</i> also prophesies.		
2 Ch. xxvii. 1	Jotham, son of Uzziah, born.	3221	783

Kings of Judah.

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
	Uzziah dies	3246	
2 K. xv. 32— 36.	Jotham, his son, succeeds. He reigns 16 years.		
Isaiah vi.	Isaiah sees the glory of the Lord. <i>Isaiah</i> and <i>Hosea</i> continue to prophesy.		
2 K. xv. 37	Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, invade Judah.	3261	743
38	Jotham dies	3262	742
	<i>Isaiah</i> vi. delivered, probably in the reign of Jotham.		
xvi. 1—4	Ahaz succeeds him. He reigns 16 years.		
5	Rezin and Pekah continue their hostili- ties against Judah.		
Isaiah vii. 1			
14, 15	<i>Isaiah</i> foretells to Ahaz the miraculous birth of the Messiah, and a speedy deliverance from the two kings his enemies. The prophecies in <i>Isaiah</i> , vii—xiv. delivered probably in the reign of Ahaz. Nevertheless, the year following, the two kings return again, and spoil his country.	3263	741
	The Idumeans and Philistines also in- vade Judea.	3264	740
2 Kings xvi. 7	Ahaz invites to his assistance Tiglath- pileser, king of Assyria, and submits to pay him tribute.		
	Ahaz remits the royal authority to his son Hezekiah.	3277	727

Kings of Israel.

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
2K. xv. 25—28	Pekahiah, or Pekaiah, his son, succeeds.	3243	761
	Pekahiah assassinated by Pekah, son of Remaliah, who reigns 20 years.	3245	759
	Arbaces, governor of Media, and Balesis, governor of Babylonia, besiege Sardanapalus, king of Assyria, in Nineveh.	3254	750
	After a siege of 3 years, Sardanapalus burns himself in his palace, with all his riches. Arbaces is acknowledged king of Media, and Balesis of Babylon.	3257	748
	Balesis, or Baladan, or Nabonassar founds the Babylonian empire. This famous epoch of Nabonassar falls 743 years before Christ, 747 before A.D. Ninus Junior, called in Scripture, Tiglath-pileser, successor of Sardanapalus, continues the Assyrian empire, but reduced into very narrow limits. He reigned 19 years according to some, 30 according to others.	3261	743
xvi. 9 xvii. 6	Tiglath-pileser defeats and slays Rezin, king of Damascus, enters the land of Israel, and takes many cities and captives; chiefly from Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh.		
	This is the <i>First Captivity</i> of Israel.		
xv. 30	Hoshea, son of Elah, slays Pekah, and usurps the kingdom.	3265	739
xviii. 1, 9, 10	He reigns peaceably the 12th year of Ahaz. He reigns 9 years.	3274	730
	Shalmaneser succeeds Tiglath-pileser, king of Nineveh.	3276	728

Kings of Judah.

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
2 Kings xvi. 20	Ahaz, king of Judah dies	3278	726
xviii	Hezekiah restores the worship of the		
2 Chr. xxix—	Lord in Judea, which Ahaz had sub-		
xxxii.	verted.		
	They begin again to gather into the	3279	725
	temple first fruits and tithes, for the		
	maintenance of the priests and mi-		
	nisters.		
	The prophecies in <i>Isaiah</i> xv—lxvi. pro-		
	bably all delivered in the reign of		
	Hezekiah, xl—lxvi. towards <i>the end</i>		
	of his reign.		
2 Kings xviii.	Hezekiah revolts from the Assyrians ;	3290	714
13, &c. xx.			
Isaiah xxxvi.	makes a league with Egypt and Cush,	3291	713
—xxxviii.			
	Sennacherib invades Hezekiah, and		
	takes several cities of Judah.		
	Hezekiah's sickness and miraculous		
	cure : his life prolonged for 15 years.		
	Sennacherib besieges Lachish.		
	Hezekiah gives money to Sennacherib,		
	who still continues his war against		
	him. He sends Rabshakeh to Jeru-		
	salem, and marches himself against		
	Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, (Cush,		
	or Arabia). Returning into Judea,		
	the Angel of the Lord destroys many		
	thousands of his army. He retires to		
	Nineveh, where he is slain by his		
	sons.		

Kings of Israel.

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
2 K. xvii. 4, 5 xviii. 9	Hoshea makes an alliance with So, king of Egypt, and endeavours to shake off the yoke of Shalmaneser.	3279	725
xvii. 6—41	Shalmaneser besieges Samaria	3280	724
xviii. 10—12	After a 3 years' siege, he takes it, and carries, beyond the Euphrates, the tribes that Tiglath-pileser had not al- ready carried into captivity in the 9th year of Hoshea ; of Hezekiah the 6th. Among the captives carried away by Shalmaneser, was Tobit, of the tribe of Naphtali, at Nineveh.	3283	721

End of the kingdom of Israel, after it had subsisted 254 years.

Judah alone.

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
Isa. xxxvii. 38.	Esar-haddon succeeds Sennacherib	3292	712
2 Kings xx. 12—20	Probably, about this time, Baladan, or Merodach-Baladan, king of Babylon, sends to congratulate Hezekiah on the recovery of his health, and to inquire about the prodigy on that occasion.		
Isaiah xxxix.			
Micah i. 1	<i>Micah</i> , the Morasthite, and, probably, <i>Nahum</i> , prophesy.		
	Tartan sent by Esar-haddon against the Philistines, the Idumeans, and the Egyptians	3293	711
2 Kings xvii. 27, 28	Esar-haddon sends an Israelitish priest to the Cuthites settled at Shechem..	3294	710
xx. 21	Hezekiah dies. Manasseh succeeds him, at the age of 12	3306	698
xxi.	He reigns 55 years.		
2 Chron. xxxiii.	Esar-haddon becomes master of Baby- lon; re-unites the empires of Assyria and Chaldea	3323	681
	Tyrtæus, Greek poet, flourished.		
	Manasseh taken by the Chaldeans, and carried to Babylon	3328	676
Judith xiii.	Holofernes is slain in Judea by Judith .	3347	657
	Manasseh dies. He returned into Judea a considerable time before; but it is not exactly known when	3361	643
2 Ks. xxi. 19— 26. xxii. 1.	Amon succeeds him. He reigns 2 years.		
2 Chro. xxxiii. xxxiv.	Josiah succeeds him, being only 8 years old	3363	641
Zephaniah i. 1	<i>Zephaniah</i> prophesies at the beginning of his reign.		
	Josiah endeavours to reform abuses	3370	634
	He restores the worship of the Lord.		
Jeremiah i. 2	<i>Jeremiah</i> begins to prophesy, in the 13th year of Josiah	3367	628
2 Kings xxii. 3. xxiii. 23. 2 Chr. xxxiv. 8. xxxv. 19. }	Hilkiah, the high-priest, finds the book of the law in the treasury of the tem- ple, in the 18th year of Josiah	3380	624
	Money collected for repairing the temple Huldah, the prophetess, foretells the ca- lamities that threaten Judah.		
	A solemn passover held by Josiah and all the people	3381	623

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

xxvii

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
	<i>Joel</i> prophesies under Josiah.		
	Josiah opposes the expedition of Necho king of Egypt against Carchemish ; is mortally wounded and dies at Jerusalem. Jeremiah composes Lamentations on his death	3394	610
2 Chron. xxxvi. 2 Kgs. xxiii. 30 Jer. xxii. 11 1 Chron. iii. 15	Jehoahaz, or Shallum, is placed on the throne by the people ; but Necho, returning from Carchemish, deposes him, at the end of 3 months, and installs Eliakim, or Jehoiakim, his brother, son of Josiah ; he reigns 11 years		
	<i>Habakkuk</i> prophesies under his reign..	3395	609
2 Kgs. xxiii. 36 2 Ch. xxxv. 5, 6 Jerem. xxvi. 1, xlv. 2.	Nebuchadnezzar besieges and takes Carchemish ; comes into Palestine : besieges and takes Jerusalem ; leaves Jehoiakim there, on condition of his paying him a large tribute	3398	606
Daniel i.	<i>Daniel</i> (at the age of 18, according to some, 22 others,) and his companions led captive to Babylon.		
	Alcæus, Greek lyric poet, flourished.		
	<i>Jeremiah</i> begins to commit his prophecies to writing	3399	605
ii.	Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great statue, predicting the <i>four</i> great monarchies. It is interpreted by Daniel, who is advanced at court	3402	602
	The history of Susanna at Babylon	3404	600
2 Kgs. xxiv. 2 Jeremiah lii. 28	Jehoiakim revolts against Nebuchadnezzar, who sends an army from Chaldea, Syria and Moab, which ravages Judæa, and brings away 3023 Jews to Babylon, in the 7th year of Jehoiakim.		
	Cyrus, son of Cambyses and Mandane, born	3405	599
2 Ks. xxiv. 2—6 2 Chr. xxxvi. 8 Jer. xxii. 18, 19	Jehoiakim revolts a second time against Nebuchadnezzar ; is taken, put to death, and cast to the fowls of the air. Reigned 11 years.		
1 Chron. iii. 16 Jer. xxii. 24 2 Ks. xxiv. 8—16. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9, 10. Jerem. xxiv. 1	Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, or Jeconias, or Coniah, succeeds him	3406	598
	Nebuchadnezzar besieges him in Jerusalem, and takes him, after he had reigned 3 months and 10 days. He, with his mother, the princes, and his treasure, is carried to Babylon, with part of the people.		

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
	Mordecai is among the captives.		
	Zedekiah, uncle to Jehoiachin, is left at Jerusalem in his place. He reigns 11 years.		
	He sends ambassadors to Babylon.		
	Jeremiah writes to the captive Jews there, (Baruch vi.)		
	Seraiah and Baruch sent by Zedekiah to Babylon	3409	595
Ezekiel i. 1	<i>Ezekiel</i> begins to prophesy in Chaldea .	3410	594
iv. v. viii.—xii.	He foretells the taking of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews.....	3411	593
2 Kgs. xxiv. 20	Zedekiah takes secret measures with the king of Egypt to revolt from the Chal-		
2Chr. xxxvi. 13	deans.		
Jerem. lii. 3	} He revolts	3414	590
Ezek. xvii.			
12—20. xxi.			
22—27			
2 Kings xxv.	Nebuchadnezzar marches against Jeru-		
Jer. xxxix. 1.	salem; besieges it; quits the siege to		
lii. 4. Ezek.	repel the king of Egypt, who comes		
xxiv. 2. Jerem.	to assist Zedekiah; returns to the		
xxxvii. 4—11	siege.		
2 Chro. xxxvi.	<i>Jeremiah</i> continues prophesying during		
17—20. Jerem.	the whole of the siege, which conti-		
xxxix. lii.	nued almost 3 years.		
	<i>Ezekiel</i> , also, in Chaldea, describes the		
	same siege.		
	Jerusalem taken on the 9th day of the		
	4th month (June—July) the 11th		
	year of Zedekiah	3416	588
	Zedekiah, endeavouring to fly by night,		
	is taken, and brought to Nebuchad-		
	nezzar at Riblah; his eyes are put		
	out, and he is carried to Babylon.		
2 Kgs. xxv. 8, 9	Jerusalem and the temple burnt the 7th		
	day of the 5th month.		
	The Jews of Jerusalem and Judæa car-		
	ried captive beyond the Euphrates:		
	the poorer classes only left in the		
	land.		
	<i>Thus ends the kingdom of Judæa, after</i>		
	<i>it had subsisted 468 years, from the</i>		
	<i>beginning of the reign of David; and</i>		
	<i>388 years from: the separation of</i>		
	<i>Judah and the ten tribes, and 134</i>		
	<i>years from the ruin of the kingdom of</i>		
	<i>Israel.</i>		

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
PERIOD VII.			
<i>From the Babylonish Captivity to the Birth of Christ, 588 years.</i>			
	The beginning of the 70 years' captivity foretold by Jeremiah	3416	588
2 Kings xxv. 23—25.	Gedaliah made governor of the remains of the people. He is slain.		
Jerem. xlv.	<i>Jeremiah</i> carried into Egypt by the Jews, after the death of Gedaliah, prophesies there	3417	587
Ezek. xxxiii.	<i>Ezekiel</i> , in Chaldea, prophesies against the captives of Judah.		
xxix. 17—20	The siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, lasted 13 years. During this interval Nebuchadnezzar wars against the Idumeans, the Ammonites, and Moabites. <i>Obadiah</i> prophesies against Idumea.	3419	585
Jerem. lii. 20	Nebuzaradan carries captive the scattered remnant of the Jews	3420	584
Daniel ii.	Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great image	3422	582
iii.	He sets up a golden statue for worship. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego cast into the burning fiery furnace.	3421	583
	Tyre taken by Nebuchadnezzar	3432	572
	He wars against Egypt.		
	<i>Æsop</i> , the Greek fabulist, flourished.		
iv.	Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great tree, &c.	3435	569
	His insanity	3436	568
	His return to his former state	3443	561
2 Kings xxv. 27—30.	He dies, and is succeeded by Evil-merodach, who releases Jehoiachin in the 37th year of his captivity, and treats him with kindness. Evil-Merodach reigns but 1 year, and dies.	3444	560
Jer. lii. 31—34	Belshazzar, his son, succeeds him ..	3445	559
Dan. vii.	Daniel's vision of the four animals.		
viii.	————— of the ram and the he goat.		
	Cyrus liberates the Persians, and takes the title of king	3446	558
v.	Belshazzar's impious feast. His death. Babylon taken.	3448	556
	Darius, the Mede, uncle to Cyrus, succeeds Belshazzar. The Assyrian and Babylonian, the <i>first</i> great, or univer-		

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
	sal, empire, ends, and the Medo-Persian, the <i>second</i> , begins.		
ix.	Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks....	3449	555
vi.	Darius decrees that supplication should be made to no other god but himself.	3450	552
	Daniel cast into the lion's den.		
2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23	Cyrus takes Babylon	3456	548
Ezra i—1	He sets the Jews at liberty, and permits		
v. 13—15. vii. 6	their return into Judea. The first		
Is. xlv. 1—6	year of his reign over all the East ..	3457	547
Ezra iii. 1—7	The Jews returning from captivity, re- new the sacrifices of the Temple....	3458	546
Dan. x—xii.	Daniel had his last vision about this time, and probably died soon after, aged 94	3470	534
	Cyrus dies, aged 70	3475	529
Ezra iv.	Cambyzes succeeds him. The Cuthites, or Samaritans, obtain a prohibition forbidding the Jews to continue the building of their temple.		
	Cambyzes dies	3483	521
	The seven Magi usurp the empire, Ar- taxata, (or Artaxerxes) one of them, forbids the building of the temple.		
	Seven chiefs of the Persians slay the Magi.		
	Darius, son of Hystaspes, otherwise Ahazuerus, acknowledged king of the Persians ; marries Atossa, the daugh- ter of Cyrus	3483	521
Hag. i. ii.	<i>Haggai</i> begins to prophesy : reproaches		
Ezra v. 1, 2	the Jews for not building the house of		
vi. 14	the Lord	3484	520
	The Jews recommence building the temple	3485	519
Zech. iii. iv.	<i>Zechariah</i> begins to prophesy about this time.		
	Darius allows the Jews to re-build their temple	3486	518
	Here properly end the 70 years' capti- vity foretold by Jeremiah, which be- gan Y.W. 3416.		
Esther i.	The feast of Darius, or Ahazuerus : he divorces Vashti	3487	517
ii.	He espouses Esther	3488	516
Ezra vi. 14—22	The dedication of the temple, rebuilt by Zerubbabel	3489	515
Esther iii.	Haman, the Amalekite's, exaltation ..	3495	509
iv.	He vows the destruction of the Jews, and procures from Ahazuerus an or- der for their extermination.		

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

xxx

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
v. ix.	Esther obtains a revocation of this decree. Haman hung on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. The Jews punish their enemies at Shushan, and throughout the Persian empire. Darius, or Ahazuerus, dies : Xerxes succeeds him	3519	585
	Xerxes dies : Artaxerxes succeeds him	3531	473
Ezra vii. 1, 7, 8	Artaxerxes sends Ezra to Jerusalem, with several priests and Levites, in his 7th year	3537	467
	Ezra reforms abuses among the Jews, especially concerning their strange wives	3538	466
	About this time, probably, Ezra, in con- junction with the Great synagogue, made a collection of the sacred writings Æschylus, the Greek tragic poet, lived.	3548	456
Nehem. i—vi. 1—14	Nehemiah obtains leave of Artaxerxes to visit Jerusalem, and to rebuild its gates and walls	3550	454
vi. 15, &c.	Dedication of the walls of Jerusalem. The Israelites put away their strange wives	3551	453
ix.	Nehemiah renews the covenant of Israel with the Lord.		
xiii. 6	Nehemiah returns to king Artaxerxes..	3563	441
7	He comes a second time into Judea, and reforms abuses	3565	439
Zech. i. 1	<i>Zechariah</i> prophesies under his govern- ment.		
Mal. i—iv.	<i>Malachi</i> , also, whom several have con- founded with Ezra.		
	Nehemiah dies	3580	424
	Plato, the celebrated philosopher, dies, aged 81	3656	348
	Alexander the Great takes Tyre and Gaza, and visits Jerusalem peaceably. He overruns the Persian empire, after great victories	3672	332
	The Samaritans build a temple on mount Gerizim.		
Dan. vii. 6 viii. 5	Darius is slain. The Medo-Persian, the <i>second</i> universal empire, ends, and is succeeded by the Grecian, or Ma- cedonian, the <i>third</i> universal empire	3674	330
vii. 6 viii. 8	Alexander dies at Babylon, and his do- minions are divided into <i>four</i> king- doms	3681	323

		Year of World.	Before Christ.
	Theocritus, the Greek poet, flourished	3722	282
	The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament supposed to be made about this time, the books of which are the same as in our Bibles.	3727	277
Dan. ii. 22 vii. 7	Antiochus the Great conquers Phœnicia and Judea. The Roman, or the <i>fourth</i> universal empire, succeeds the Grecian	3802	202
	Antiochus Epiphanes persecutes the Jews, puts a stop to the daily sacrifice, and builds a fortress to curb the Jews. Seven brethren and their mother are martyred	3836	168
	Jesus, the son of Sirach, author of the book of Ecclesiasticus, flourished about this time.		
Maccab.	The Maccabees oppose Antiochus with success, and the daily sacrifice is restored	3839	165
	Hyrcanus conquers the Idumeans, and compels them to be circumcised....	3875	129
	Pompey reduces Syria, thus ending the Grecian, and establishing the Roman empire. He takes Jerusalem, and the Jews become dependant on the Romans	3941	63
	Antigonus and Herod oppose each other	3962	42
	Herod takes Jerusalem, and is established in the royal authority	3967	37
	Augustus Cæsar emperor	3973	31
	Herod undertakes to rebuild, or thoroughly to repair and beautify, the temple	3985	19
	The solemn dedication of the city of Cæsarea, which Herod had built in honour of Augustus.....	3994	10
	Herod puts his two sons to death on a frivolous accusation of treason. He had before put his wife and mother to death	3998	6

END OF THE CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE TO VOLUME II. OF THIS
WORK : OR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
HISTORY.

A
POPULAR COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE,
IN A
SERIES OF SERMONS.

VOLUME II.

SERMON XXXIV.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—2 KINGS I—IX.

KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL—AHAZIAH AND ELIJAH—ELIJAH
CARRIED TO HEAVEN—ELISHA—NAAMAN THE LEPER—THE
LITTLE MAID—THE SIEGE OF SAMARIA—BENHADAD—HA-
ZAEI—JEHU.

2 KINGS v. 17.

Thy servant will, henceforth, offer neither burnt-offering, nor sacrifice, unto other gods, but unto the Lord.

THE first lessons, on Sunday last, were the xxist and xxiid, or last two chapters of the 1st Book of Kings ; and the first lessons, this day, are the vth and ixth of the 2d Book. I must, therefore, consider, now, these first nine chapters, as far as our time will allow.

The Second Book of Kings continues the history of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, during the space of time, from the death of Jehoshaphat, in the

year of the world 3115, to the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, in the year of the world 3416, and before Christ 588, a period of three hundred years. The last three verses of the first Book have been improperly separated from this. The history of the two kingdoms, interwoven in this book, presents a long succession of wicked sovereigns, in the kingdom of Israel, from Ahaziah to Hosea, in whose reign Samaria was taken by Shalmanezzer king of Assyria, and the ten tribes were carried captive into that country. In the kingdom of Judah, we find some few pious princes among many who were corrupt. Sixteen kings filled the throne of Judah, from Jehoram to Zedekiah, in whose reign the kingdom was totally overthrown, and the people carried into captivity to Babylon.

During this period many prophets lived and taught, as Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and others.

The second Book of Kings comprises twenty-five chapters, which may be divided into *two* parts, containing, 1. The history of the two kingdoms, until the end of that of Israel, from the 1st to the end of the XVIIth chapters; and, 2dly, the history of Judah alone to its destruction, the XVIIIth chapter, to the end of the XXVth, or end of the book.

The two Books of Kings, and particularly this second, abound with impressive and lively narrations, and the strict impartiality with which the author of each book has related events and circumstances dishonourable to his nation, affords a convincing evidence of his fidelity and integrity. They shew the long-suffering of God towards his people, and his severe chastisements for their iniquitous abuse of his

mercy: at the same time, they mark most clearly the truth of God, both in his promises, and in his threatenings, and shew the vanity and folly of trusting in an arm of flesh, and the weak state of human kingdoms, from which piety and justice are banished, and form an admirable lesson for all communities, from the mightiest kingdom, to the humblest village.

I have already suggested, that the last three verses of the first book are improperly separated from the second book, as they relate to Ahaziah, whose history we have in the 1st chapter of the 2d book. From them we learn, that he walked in the way of his father Ahab, in worshipping the golden calves, and of his mother Jezebel; he did not take warning by the death of his father, nor was moved by the threatenings of Elijah against his mother and family.

In the 1st chapter of the 2d book we have an account of Moab's rebellion; of Ahaziah's fall, by which he was so much hurt, that he sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, whether he should recover: when Elijah, by God's command, met them, and reproved them for inquiring of a false god, and foretold his death. The messengers went back, and reported this, when Ahaziah sent a captain and fifty soldiers to apprehend Elijah; but Elijah prayed to God for fire to come down from heaven and consume them. A second captain and his fifty were sent, who shared the same fate; and—strange to say—a third was sent; but *he* besought Elijah, and was spared; and Elijah went with him to Ahaziah, and, in person, denounced his death, and which accordingly happened.

It may be proper here, to avoid confusion, to call your attention to the 17th verse, where mention is made of two kings of the name of Jehoram, who

were called also Joram, one king of Judah, the other of Israel. Jehoram king of Judah was the son of Jehoshaphat, and married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. Jehoram, king of Israel, was the son of Ahab, and younger brother of Ahaziah. So, likewise, there were two Ahaziah's; one the son of Ahab, and king of Israel, the other, the son of Jehoram, and grandson of Jehoshaphat, all kings of Judah. A table of the kings of Judah and Israel, with the dates and lengths of their reigns, the places in Scripture in which they are mentioned, and the prophets who flourished in their reigns, and the principal events, is given in Bickersteth's Scripture Help, (p. 36.) which is very useful in affording to the eye means to assist the memory in arranging in the mind the history of these kingdoms*.

The IId chapter gives an account of Elijah's being taken by God from earth to heaven without suffering death, as the righteous Enoch had been before; and as Christ was, afterwards, in the flesh, though he had suffered and overcome death. Of the particular manner in which Enoch was taken up, we are not told. In the case of Elijah, we are told, verse 11, "there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire:" and in the lxviiiith Psalm, the 17th verse, we are told, that "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; and the Lord is among them, as in the holy place of Sinai:" And it is added, 2 Kings, ii. 11, "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." So that an host of angels, appearing like a chariot and horses, took him up,

* There are, however, some inaccuracies in it, as to the length of some of the reigns; a similar, and more correct one, founded on Mr. Horne's *Chronological Index*, is given at the beginning of this volume.

and carried him off “as a rushing mighty wind.” (Acts ii. 2.) And, when our blessed Lord was transfigured in glory on Mount Tabor, Moses and Elijah—Elias, as he is called in the New Testament,—were seen conversing with him.

Do *we* admire at this, and wish it were *our* lot not to suffer the pains of death, but to be carried, at once, alive, from this world to heaven, by “the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof?” To *many* it is virtually granted, and would be to *all*, would all but serve God,—not in a sinless obedience,—for *that* did *not* Elijah do—but in a lively faith. When the beggar Lazarus died, full of sores and pressed with hunger, his wretched body was not indeed taken to heaven,—no he was better without it, till it was glorified,—but his soul “was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” (Luke xvi. 22.) The only “sting of death is sin;” and to those who truly believe in God and Christ, and lay hold on him, by a lively faith, as “the propitiation for their sins,” (1 John ii. 2. iv. 10.) death has no sting, no terrors. Were it not for a consciousness of sin unpardoned, and the terrors of punishment, there are few people who have not, probably, often suffered more during their lives than at their deaths.—O, my brethren, so believe and so live, that you may pass from this world to the next without feeling “the sting of death,” and be carried to heaven by “the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.”

The latter part of the chapter, from the 19th verse, records two miracles wrought by Elisha, who had been anointed to succeed Elijah in the prophetic office, and for whom his mantle had fallen from him as he “ascended up on high.” The one, his healing the poisonous spring by the college at Jericho; and

the other his cursing the forty-two children, or young persons, at Bethel, who mocked him, when two bears came out of the wood and destroyed them. This has been censured by some as an inhuman act. But let it be remembered, that Bethel was one of the places where there was a college of the prophets, and which was, also, one of the chief seats of idolatry, where one of the golden calves was set up. The children must have been instructed to do this, and were capable of knowing better of themselves; and this judgment was a proper punishment on both the parents and the children, and a warning to all future generations. Let it be a lesson to all who teach others to treat God's ministers and people lightly; but, more especially, how they shall treat the Great God himself. Let parents, and others, who have taught their children to swear and blaspheme God, by their own example, or have not corrected them, when they have learned it from others, and practise it, let them think on the fate of the children of Bethel, and tremble: though no instant judgment should overtake them, most assuredly there is a day coming when all will be brought to judgment—not only “for every *idle* word,” (Matt. xii. 36.) but much more especially for all prophaneness and blasphemy.

The III^d chapter gives an account of the king of Moab, who was tributary to the king of Israel, neglecting to pay his tribute, and rebelling against him: When Jehoram got Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom to assist him: their being distressed for water in the wilderness of Edom, the miraculous supply obtained for them by Elisha, the victory obtained by the allies over Moab, and the king of Moab offering his son as a burnt-offering, before their eyes, on the

wall, to Chemosh, to obtain his favour : a sight so abhorrent to the Israelites, that they withdrew from it, and returned to their own land.

The IVth chapter gives an account of several miracles wrought by Elisha, each of which is highly interesting, and presents ample matter for reflection : but we must be contented with merely the mention of them.

The first is the increasing the oil of the widow of one of the sons of the prophets, to enable her to pay her debts. The second is the obtaining from God a child for the Shunamite and his wife who were so hospitable to him, and restoring that son to life when he had been killed by a stroke of the sun in the harvest field. The third is his rendering wholesome the poisonous gourds which the sons of the prophets had gathered and made into pottage, which was killing them ; and the fourth his multiplying—as his blessed master afterwards did—twenty loaves, or small cakes of barley, for offerings, to the supplying of an hundred men, leaving a remainder of fragments.

The Vth chapter, the first lesson at this morning's service, gives an account of Naaman the Syrian, his leprosy and cure, and the sin and punishment of Gehazi. It begins with stating, that “ Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria : he was, also, a mighty man in valour.” But, of what avail was the favour of the king and the honour of the people, when he was loathsome to himself and to all around him ? for, it is added, “ he was a leper.”

The next three verses introduce us to a character of no less interest, though in a more humble station of life. It is stated, that “ the Syrians had gone

out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would God"—or, as the phrase is common with us, "I would to God," or "I would that God would order it so," that—"my Lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy. And one went in, and told his Lord, saying, Thus, and thus, said the maid that is of the land of Israel." Though the account is short, yet much is implied, and much to be learned from it. Though *young*, and *a captive*, torn from her home and her friends, and a servant, or slave, among strangers, yet she conforms herself to her situation, and behaves with meekness and affability, and is anxious to do all she can to benefit the master and mistress whom she is compelled to serve. How does this example shame those servants, who, seeking a place, and at liberty to leave it when they please, and receiving their master's or mistress's wages, yet conduct themselves with carelessness, insolence, and ingratitude! But the case was, she was pious, she was religious, and feared God, she "did service as to the Lord, and not unto man." (Eph. vi. 7.) She knew God and his prophet; and her piety brought her master and his family to the knowledge of the God of Israel, the only true God. Little maids, ever keep in mind this beautiful example of the "little maid who waited on Naaman's wife."

But I must hasten on—Naaman told this to the king his master, who wrote a letter unto the king of Israel, which Naaman took. But, when the king of Israel read it, he rent his clothes, fearing that the king did it merely for the sake of picking a quarrel with him, as he knew that he was unable to cure a

leper. But, when Elisha heard of it, he desired the captain, or general, might be sent to him, that he might “know there was a prophet in Israel,” and a God under whose power he acted. So the general came with all his retinue to the house of the prophet, expecting, as was probably done by the pretenders to medicine and miraculous powers in his own country, that he would come out to him, and shew him great marks of respect, and call upon God, and use some significant actions. But “Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go, and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.” Elisha sent a messenger to him, not for state, nor yet out of contempt; but because he loved retirement, and lest he should seem too fond of the honour done him. But Naaman thought the prophet did not treat him with sufficient respect, and that the rivers of his own country must be as efficacious as those of Israel; and, indeed, washing in Jordan had no natural tendency to heal him; but this was to exercise his faith and humility, and put an honour on Jordan, where so many miracles had already been done, and on which a greater honour was yet to be conferred, by the baptism of Him, who cleanseth us from all sin, that leprosy of the soul. So, Naaman, having no faith in the prophet and his remedy, expressed his anger, “and went away in a rage.”

It was the happiness of Naaman, however, not to be waited upon by servants who were afraid of him, and gave way to his humours, and joined in abuse, or ridicule, of the prophets, but by servants of great wisdom and prudence, and who were not afraid of speaking upon a sufficient occasion; for “his servants came near, and spake unto him” with great

firmness, but respect, “My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing,” if he had prescribed a long course of physic, or some painful operation, “wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?” the trial can do no harm, and may do good, especially as it is commanded by the prophet.

Naaman, though of a warm temper, a soldier, and a man of consequence, was not above being advised by his servants. “Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

How much of the first unbelief of Naaman do we see in persons in this day. When we say to those infested with the leprosy of sin, “Wash, and be clean:” Wash your sins in the blood of the lamb: apply the blood of Christ, shed at his crucifixion: “wash, and be clean,” by being baptized in a true faith: “believe and live” (Mark xvi. 16. John iii. 15.): eat the body and drink the blood of Christ, by faith in his holy sacrament: we seem to propose to them means too trifling and unavailable: but let them try; let them “taste” and they will “see” and feel “that the Lord is gracious,” and that the blood of Christ, the water of baptism, the bread and wine of the Lord’s supper, taken by *faith*, are all available to the putting away of sin and to eternal life. Let them follow the example of Naaman, in his better mind, who “returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him, and said, “Behold, now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now, therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant,” take the present I have brought. This Elisha refused. “And

Naaman said, Shall there not, then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth?" to build an altar with, as a pledge of his communion with that people and service; "for thy servant will, henceforth, offer neither burnt-offering, nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord."

How does the example of this *heathen* shame those professing *Christians*, who, on their recovery from sickness and accidents, feel no gratitude to the God who gave them remedy and health: who do not offer even "the sacrifice of thanksgiving," (Psalm cxvi. 15,) nor determine to serve him with a more perfect heart! Or, if they should make some feeble resolutions, break them all, and return to their sinful ways.

Naaman, however, felt a difficulty in his new profession: "In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that, when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he lean on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing. And he," that is Elisha, "said unto him, Go in peace." Many persons consider this as Elisha's readily assenting to Naaman's suggestion, and as a temporizing, or double dealing, in matters of religion. But, I confess it does *not* strike me in that light. I conceive it to amount only to this, as *we* should say, "We will not enter upon that subject: I leave that to your conscience. You profess a faith in the true God, and that you will worship him only, and do all to his honour and glory. You will, therefore, draw nearer and nearer to him, and abhor all idols and every thing relating to them; you will, therefore, either convert your master to the true God, and, so, forsake Rimmon;

er you will, excuse yourself to your master, and cleave to God yourself alone." Elisha was unwilling to put "new wine into old bottles," (Matt. ix. 17.) and enjoin too much at once. "The love of God casteth out idols."

The latter part of the chapter, from the 20th verse, gives an account of the covetousness of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, who, by telling a lie, obtained from Naaman a part of the present which he had brought for Elisha; and for doing which the leprosy of Naaman was inflicted upon him.

The VIth chapter, from the 1st to the end of the 7th verse, gives an account of a miracle wrought by Elisha, when he and several of the sons of the prophets were hewing wood by the side of Jordan, and the iron ax-head belonging to one of them fell into the water, Elisha caused it to swim to the top, that he might recover it.

The remainder of the chapter, and the VIIth chapter, give an account of the besieging of Samaria by the king of Syria, in which Elisha miraculously discloses the counsels of the king of Syria to the King of Israel; and, on the king of Syria sending a force to apprehend him, he strikes them with blindness for a time, leads them into the midst of Samaria, and restores their eye-sight that they may see where they are: the king of Israel would have smitten them; but, at the desire of Elisha, they are feasted, and dismissed. The siege being renewed, after some time, by Benhadad, Samaria was reduced to the utmost distress by famine, according to the threat and prophecy of Moses against Israel,—Deut. xxviii. 53, and following verses,—if they did not serve God; and when women actually eat their own children. The king, on hearing this, threatened the

life of Elisha; but he prophesied, that the next day by that time, there should be plenty in Samaria, which was brought about by the Syrians hearing, or fancying that they heard, the noise of a great army, on which they fled, and left their provisions and goods behind, as the spoil of the Samaritans.

In the VIIIth chapter, from the 1st to the end of the 6th verse, is an account of a seven years' famine in Samaria, when the woman of Shunem and her son, at the advice of Elisha, went into the land of the Philistines; and, when she returned, she found her land seized; but, on application to the king, it was restored.

At the 7th verse begins the account of the sickness of Benhadad, when, Elisha being at Damascus, having gone there on account of the famine, Benhadad sent Hazael to Elisha to know whether he should recover. Elisha replied that his sickness was not so bad, but that he *might* recover; but that, nevertheless, he *would not*; and, fixing his eyes upon him, he wept, to think of the barbarities which he foresaw Hazael would inflict upon Israel, when he became king of Syria, and of which he told him. Hazael's reply was, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do these things?" He knew not the corruption of his heart, which was not as yet called into action; but he murdered his master to become king; and committed the enormities, at the mention only of which, before, the better part of his nature revolted.

We have, also, an account of the wicked reign of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, the revolt of Edom from Judah, and the reign of Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram king of Judah.

Elijah had been ordered,—see 1 Kings xix. 16,—to anoint Jehu for the destruction of Ahab's family;

but Ahab's humiliation had respited the execution for fifteen years. Elisha was now old, and too well known to execute the commission himself, which required secrecy; he, therefore, as related in the IXth chapter, the first lesson at this evening's service, sent one of the young men of the prophets to Ramoth-gilead, which the Israelites had taken, and which was now kept by the army, of which Jehu was the captain. There, at a meeting of the officers, the prophet called him out, and anointed him; and his fellow officers, on hearing what had been done, proclaimed him king. He, immediately, set off for Jezreel, where Jehoram the son of Ahab was staying, and who, on hearing of Jehu's coming, set off to meet him. They met—in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite—and, when Jehoram found what was Jehu's errand, he turned about his chariot to fly; upon which Jehu drew his bow, and his arrow pierced his heart. He sunk down in his chariot, and died, and dogs licked his blood. Ahaziah, too, who was the son of Ahab's daughter was slain; and Jezebel was thrown out of a window, and eaten by dogs, in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite, whom she had caused to be murdered.

When speaking of the sin of Achan, of the curse denounced by God upon him who removed his neighbour's land-mark, and, last Sunday, of Ahab's coveting Naboth's vineyard, I have already enlarged upon the sin of covetousness, and of the many other sins into which it leads those who give way to it: but the subject here meets us again in the punishment inflicted upon Jezebel and the house of Ahab. And, indeed, it can never be too often exposed and warned against, since it pervades all degrees, from the highest to the lowest, from Ahab king of Israel

to Gehazi the servant of the prophet ; from kings, in these days, to the poor man who would have his pay without doing his proper portion of work, and who steals, not only from his richer neighbours, but from those who are as poor as, and poorer than, himself.

If a disclosure of the rightful possessors of all property could take place, what iniquity would be laid open ! what robbery—what fraud, what cheating, what lying,—what extorting by threats—by murder direct and indirect—what wrong in respect to *wills*,—by wills destroyed, by wills forged, by wills obtained by undue influence !—Well may the Apostle say, that “ covetousness is idolatry :” for it draws off effectually from God, and makes those who give way to it the worshippers of Mammon.

One of the greatest blessings which a man can enjoy is *a contented heart*, contented with that station, and that portion of things, which it hath pleased God to give him, and who brings down his expenses, his wishes, his whole heart in obedience to what he feels and knows to be the will of God in respect to himself. I would earnestly recommend to your attention the XXXVIIth Psalm—the time will not allow me to read it now, but it will repay you well for the perusal at home ;—at the 16th verse, it says, “ A small thing that the righteous hath, is better than great riches of the ungodly :” this we may turn into *a prayer* in the words of Agur, “ O Lord, remove far from me vanity and lies : Give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me ; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord ? or, lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.” (Prov. xxx. 8, 9.)

Grant this, O gracious and bountiful Father, for thy dear Son’s sake, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXV.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—2 KINGS X—XVII.

JEHU — ATHALIAH — JEHOASH — JEHOAHAZ — JOASH — AMAZIAH
— JEROBOAM THE SECOND — AZARIAH — ZACHARIAH — SHAL-
LUM — MENAHEM — PEKAHIAH — PEKAH — JOTHAM — AHAZ —
HOSHEA — THE CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL — THE SAMARITANS.

2 KINGS x. 30, 31.

And the Lord said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel. But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.

WHEN we were considering the IXth chapter, on Sunday last, the time would not allow me to take that particular notice of the character of Jehu which it demands; but, as he again appears before us, in the Xth chapter, from which I have taken my text, and which is the first lesson at this morning's service, we will give it a more particular consideration now.

Ahab and his descendants had been doomed to destruction for his sins in general, and, more particularly, for the matter of Naboth; but Ahab humbled himself, and God was pleased to defer the extermination of the family to his son's days, and which

actually took place after a lapse of fifteen years. Ramoth-gilead was a town of much strength, which, properly, belonged to Israel, but had been taken by the Syrians. Ahab made an expedition against it, accompanied by Jehoshaphat king of Judah, but he was slain there, and his army routed. Afterwards, it seems, that Jehoram, the son of Ahab, made another attempt to recover it; and, so far, succeeded; but was wounded, and went to Jezreel to be healed of his wounds, leaving the army under the command of Jehu to keep possession. At this time, while the officers were met together, Elisha sent a young prophet with a charge to call Jehu out from amongst them, to take him to a private apartment, and to say, that God had appointed him to be king for the purpose of cutting off the family of Ahab; and, then, to anoint him, and instantly to flee away.

What *should have been* the conduct of Jehu on this occasion? Undoubtedly to have consulted with Elisha, the prophet of God, what steps he should take; but, instead of that, he set about it in his own *hot-headed* way, regardless of mercy, of truth, or consistency. We find, indeed, in the IXth chapter, that he destroyed Jehoram, Ahaziah and Jezebel; and, in the Xth, we hear, that he destroyed seventy sons, (that is sons, grandsons and nephews,) of Ahab, that were in Samaria, and forty-two of the brethren, or nephews of Ahaziah; and, under pretence of offering a sacrifice to Baal, he called all the priests and worshippers of Baal together, and then had them put to death. All this, it might be said, was agreeable to the letter, if not to the intention, of Jehu's commission, and shewed a zeal, though a misguided one. But it is said, at the 29th verse, "Howbeit, from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made

Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan."

We are told, at the 15th verse, that, after Jehu had caused the children of Ahaziah to be put to death, he met "Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, coming to meet him." Jehonadab was a person of great piety and eminence in Israel; a Kenite, and a descendant of Jethro. He enjoined upon his sons an austere life, as we read Jeremiah xxxv. 6—8., that they should drink no wine, nor live in cities; but be shepherds in the country, lest they should be corrupted in those luxurious and idolatrous times. This pious and eminent person, hearing what Jehu had done in obedience to God's commands, came to congratulate him, and encourage him to extirpate idolatry. Jehu, thinking a person of his character and reputation would add weight and acceptance to what he was doing, especially amongst the pious Israelites, addressed him in the most friendly manner; "And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord."

But *was* Jehu's a "zeal for the Lord?" No: if it had been, it would have been uniform, consistent, and without ostentation and boast, and he would have departed from the sins of Jeroboam, and put away the golden calves. The fact was, that the destroying of Ahab's family and the worshippers of Baal was for Jehu's own personal interest, and aggrandisement, and security upon the throne; but the same mistaken policy, which made Jeroboam *set up* the golden calves, made Jehu *continue them*. His *zeal* was for *himself*, not for *the Lord*.

Nevertheless, even for this imperfect obedience God was pleased to reward him, and to promise, that

his “ children of the fourth generation” should “ sit on the throne of Israel.” And his own reign was continued for twenty-eight years; the longest, except that of Jeroboam the second, of any of the kings of *Israel*.

The character of Jehu is by no means uncommon. How often do we see, in rulers, and magistrates, and persons in inferior offices, nay in private persons, those who are zealous for the Lord, in some respects, but grievously negligent and wanting in others: zealous according to their own interests, feelings and opinions; but, where these are not concerned, the honour of God is disregarded, and, perhaps, insulted. Hence we see,—if not the golden calves in Bethel and in Dan,—yet God’s sabbaths profaned by thinly attended places of worship and crowded ale-houses, open shops, and persons carrying on their worldly calling,—the word of God slighted and his name blasphemed.

The XIth chapter gives an account of the wonderful preservation of Joash (called also Jehoash) from the cruelty of Athaliah; the method Jehoiada took to set him upon the throne; the death of the usurper; the establishment of Joash; and a reformation begun.

Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab, and the widow of Jehoram king of Judah, whom Jehu slew. “ And, when Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw her son was dead,” that Jehu had slain him, and all the royal family of Israel, also, she formed the desperate resolution, to revenge it on the house of David, and “ she arose and destroyed all,” that is she attempted to destroy all, and thought she had done so by “ the seed royal,” Jehoram’s children by another wife, all princes of the blood. She, perhaps, was afraid lest

Jehu should kill her, because she was of Ahab's family ; and therefore, destroyed the royal family, and attempted to secure herself in the throne. It appears, from 2 Chron. xxiv. 7, that she had some sons of her own by another husband, to whom she hoped to leave the crown. But she forgot the promise of God to David, that his seed should sit upon the throne as long as the kingdom continued ; and " Jeshosheba, the daughter of king Joram" by another wife, " sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons which were slain ;" they carried him off wounded, but not dead, though Athaliah concluded him to be so ; and they, Jehosheba and her husband Jehoiada, the high priest, " hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bed-chamber" belonging to the high priest, " from Athaliah, so that he was not slain. And he was with her, hid in the house of the Lord, six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land," and established idolatry again.

When Joash was towards seven years of age, and Athaliah had set the people against her by her cruelties and idolatry, " Jehoiada sent" privately, " and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains, and the guard," who were well affected to the house of David, and friends to true religion, " and brought them to him into the house of the Lord, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath" of fidelity and secrecy " of them in the house of the Lord, and shewed them the king's son." And arrangements were made for proclaiming Josiah king in the temple, on a Sabbath ; and which was, accordingly, done ; " he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the *testimony*," or law of God, which he was to read and study, and by the

rules of which he was to live and govern ; “ and they made him king, and anointed him ; and they clapped their hands, and said, *God save the king.*”

Athaliah, hearing the acclamations, entered the temple to know the cause, when Jehoiada ordered the officers to take her out of the temple, and put her to death ; which was, accordingly, done, and the house of Baal was broken down, and the priest of Baal slain before the altars.

The XIIth chapter gives an account of the good reign of Jehoash, so long as Jehoiada lived ; except that the high places were not taken away ; but he repaired the house of the Lord. After the death of Jehoiada, as appears from the XXIVth chapter of the 2nd book of Chronicles, he was drawn aside by the evil advice of the princes ; when God stirred up Hazael, king of Syria, and Jehoash was obliged to buy him off with the treasures of the temple. His servants formed a conspiracy against him, and put him to death, after a reign of forty years.

The XIIIth chapter gives an account of the reigns of Jehoahaz the son of Jehu, and of Joash his son, in Israel, both of whom practised the sins of Jeroboam, on which account God delivered them into the hand of Hazael and of Benhadad his son, during the reign of Jehoahaz ; but gave some deliverance to Joash, according to the prophecy of Elisha just before his death, the account of which begins at the 14th verse.

After this chapter, the XXVth chapter of the 2d book of Chronicles might be read.

The XIVth chapter returns to the kingdom of Judah, where we find, that Amaziah succeeded Joash, and was, on the whole, a good king ; but suffered the high-places to remain. At the 8th verse is an

account of a foolish message, which Amaziah sent “to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us look one another in the face.” It is not very easy to make out what was the meaning of Amaziah by this message; but, probably this was not the whole of it, and the purport, as we may infer from the answer, was to propose a meeting, in order to form a treaty of marriage between the son of Amaziah and the daughter of Jehoash, with a threat, either expressed or implied, that, if he did not consent, he should come up against him with his army, being flushed with success in an expedition against the Edomites, mentioned in the 7th verse. Jehoash replied to this by the parable, or fable, of *the thistle* and the *cedar*, and went up against him, when they “looked each other in the face,” and Jerusalem was taken and plundered by Jehoash. Soon after this, Jehoash died, and his son Jeroboam the second succeeded him. Amaziah lived for fifteen years after the death of Jehoash, when he was killed by a conspiracy, and was succeeded by his son Azariah, called also Uzziah.

Jeroboam the second reigned forty-one years in Samaria, a longer time than any other king of *Israel*. In his time the prophets Hosea and Amos prophesied; and many passages in their prophecies shew, that the most shameful idolatries and debaucheries were practised among the Israelites at this time.

The XVth chapter, from the 1st to the end of the 7th verse, gives an account of the good reign of Azariah, which lasted for fifty-two years, the longest reign, except Manasseh’s, of any of the kings of *Judah*. The too-common exception, however, is made, that “the high places were not removed.” He was afflicted with leprosy, as we learn from 2 Chron.

xxvi., for invading the priest's office, and was obliged to live in a separate house, and his son Jotham was his deputy, or judge in his stead.

At the 8th verse begins an account of several kings of Israel who reigned during the time of Azariah king of Judah. There is great disorder in the dates when these kings began to reign; but this is common in times of confusion; as, in our own history, the reign of Charles the Second is sometimes reckoned from his restoration in the year 1660, and sometimes from the year 1648, when his father was beheaded.

Zachariah, the son of Jeroboam the Second, was the fourth in succession from Jehu; and, by his reigning, God fulfilled his promise to Jehu for his imperfect obedience, that his sons, to the fourth generation, should sit on the throne of Israel. He reigned, however, but for six months, when he was conspired against by Shallum, who reigned but one month. Who Shallum was, and what was his pretence for this conspiracy, is not related. It seems that the king was secretly hated, and that many were engaged in it; that they destroyed the king publicly; and, thus, the prophecy, in Amos vii. 9., was accomplished.

Menahem came up to Samaria against Shallum, and slew him. He reigned ten years. He began his reign with acts of the greatest injustice and cruelty; for, when he came back to the place where the army lay, the city refusing to own his title to the kingdom, he smote it, and was guilty of the most horrible barbarity. He followed the sins of Jeroboam.

At verse 19 it is said, that "Pul, the king of Assyria, came against the land," when Menahem pur-

chased his friendship by a large sum, which he exacted from his subjects. It is probable that this Pul was the founder of the Assyrian empire, and was the king of Nineveh, to whom Jonah was sent. It appears, from 1 Chron. v. 26, that he had, before this, carried the tribes beyond Jordan into captivity.

Menahem was succeeded by his son Pekahiah, who reigned for but two years, when Pekah conspired against him, and reigned for twenty years; and in his reign Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, the son of Pul, came up against Israel, and carried two of the tribes within Jordan captive to Assyria.

At the 30th verse we read that Hoshea conspired against Pekah, and got possession of his throne.

At the 32d verse we read that Jotham succeeded his father Azariah in the kingdom of Judah, and reigned well for sixteen years; and, in his days, the Lord began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel.

He was succeeded by his son Ahaz, of whom we read in the XVIth chapter. He reigned for sixteen years, and was the worst king that Judah ever had. His history requires peculiar attention, in order to understand the prophecies, especially that of Isaiah who lived in his time. He was attacked by Rezin and Pekah, on which he sent to the king of Assyria for help, who went against Damascus, and took it, and slew Rezin, and carried the people captive; and Ahaz, going to Damascus, to meet him, adopted his idolatry, and destroyed the temple-worship. Orton sums up his character, by saying, “This is *that king Ahaz*, that most notorious offender, who never did any good, who never prospered in any attempt, who shut up the doors of God’s house, who cut in pieces the vessels, who built altars in every corner of Jeru-

saalem, and who sacrificed to the gods of Syria, though they could not help the Syrians themselves *.” He died ingloriously, and was succeeded by good king Hezekiah.

The XVIIth chapter gives an account of the reign of Hoshea over Israel in Samaria for nine years. “He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him:” he was not quite so bad, for we find in the history of Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxx., that he did not hinder the people from going to Jerusalem. “Against him came up Shalmanezer king of Assyria,” the son of Tiglath-pileser; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents,” that is, became tributary to him. “And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea,” he refused paying the tribute, “for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt,” to assist him, “and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years;” he first took and destroyed Moab, to prevent any disturbances on that side, as we find from the XVth and XVIth chapters of the prophet Isaiah. We have no particular account of the siege; but, by many of the prophecies, it appears that the people were treated very cruelly. The whole prophecy of Hosea relates to this; and, also, the beginning of Micah.

“In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor, by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes;” but many

* Vol. III. p. 511.

were still left in the land, who were afterwards carried away by his son.

From the 7th, to the end of the 22nd verse, is an enumeration of the sins of Israel, which provoked God to give them up into captivity in the land of Assyria, and which happened after Israel had subsisted, as a distinct kingdom from Judah, 254 years.

At the 24th verse we are told that “the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel.” These were inhabitants of some nations which he had conquered, whose fidelity he suspected, and, therefore, made this exchange, and put them into the cities where the ten tribes formerly dwelt. These did not pay any respect to the God of Israel, Jehovah, and, therefore, he sent lions among them to plague and devour them. On this, they sent to the king of Assyria, to say, that they understood not the way of the God of the land. The king sent one of the priests whom he had brought captive to instruct them; but he was, probably, an idolatrous one, and a worshipper of Baal, as he settled at Bethel; or, at best, was a worshipper of Jehovah and of Baal too; and the new settlers continued to worship their various gods, and made a strange medley of religion, which lasted about 300 years, till the temple on mount Gerizim was built, and the people were brought to worship the true God, but not in the *place* which he had commanded. They were afterwards called Samaritans.

Here the history of the ten tribes concludes, there being no account afterwards of what became of them. Some say they were lost among the nations. Many of them, no doubt, settled together, and may sub-

sist to this day, probably, among the Tartars. There are many customs similar to those of the Israelites among some of the East Indians *. Wherever they went, they would carry some general knowledge of the true God; and, as St. James directed his epistle to *the twelve tribes*, some think it very probable, that they will be restored at last †.

The XVIIIth chapter, which is the first lesson at this evening's service, begins the account of the reign of good king Hezekiah; but, as we meet the subject again on Sunday next, it will be the most advisable to defer it, and consider the whole at once.

And, now, let us bestow a brief reflection upon *Israel* gone into *captivity*,—the greater part of the posterity of faithful Abraham, they whom God brought out of Egypt “with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm,” whom he sustained miraculously for forty years in the wilderness, and led into “a land flowing with milk and honey,” and to make room for whom he had destroyed the idolatrous Canaanites,—to whom he had revealed himself most particularly, and caused a temple to be built to Him, and a pure worship to be established,—behold this people oppressed by strangers, suffering unparalleled distress, torn from their own country, and carried captives to a remote land! And, what was the *cause*? SIN. They forsook the true God, they gave the honour due to him to false gods and idols, they practised all kinds of wickedness. But there is a *worse captivity* beyond this visible world. What are the afflictions and bondage of this world, com-

* In the volumes of The Jewish Expositor there are papers endeavouring to prove that there are traces of the ten tribes among the native Americans.

† See Orton, Vol. III. p. 517.

pared with the captivity, the bondage, the sufferings of everlasting torments with evil spirits and devils in a hell to come? Yet this will be the portion of all who forsake God *now*. Let us, then, ask ourselves this question, "Am I serving God? or am I serving Satan?" All those who have not forsaken sin, and repented, and turned to God by his blessed son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, are in a state of condemnation, and doomed to an everlasting captivity. But with Christ there is plenteous redemption. All who turn to God in Him shall in no wise be cast out, but shall be restored to the heavenly Canaan, the new, the everlasting Jerusalem, there to live for ever with God and with Christ. My brethren,—I speak as the minister of God,—Come, come to heaven! Come, come to Christ!! Come, come to God!!!

SERMON XXXVI.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—2 KINGS XVIII—XXV.

HEZEKIAH—ASSYRIA—SENNACHERIB—GEORGE III. AND BONAPARTE—MANASSEH—AMON—JOSIAH—JEHOAHAZ—JEHOIAKIM—JEHOIACHIN—ZEDEKIAH—THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH.

2 KINGS xxiii. 27.

And the Lord said, I will remove Judah, also, out of my sight, as I have removed Israel; and I will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.

THE first lessons, at morning and evening service, this day, are the IXth, Xth and the XXIIIrd chapters of the second book of Kings; but I said in my discourse on Sunday last, that, as the XVIIIth chapter began the account of the reign of good king Hezekiah, and the subject was continued as this day, I should defer the consideration of it, that we might take the whole of his reign at once.

In the XIth chapter of the book of the prophet Hosea, the 12th verse, the Lord says, “Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.” And, in the XVIIth chapter of the 2nd book of Kings, we beheld Israel in desolation, which was, indeed, a melancholy scene; but, in the XVIIIth, we have a more pleasant one opening upon us; we see Judah in great pros-

perity, under a zealous and pious prince. Good king Hezekiah was the son of Ahaz, the worst king that ever Judah had. But the sacred historian informs us, that “his mother’s name was Abi”—she is called, 2 Chron. xxix. 1., Abijah—“the daughter of Zachariah,” or Zechariah. This was, probably, that Zachariah, mentioned 2 Chron. xxvi. 5, who had so great influence in Uzziah’s time to keep him steady; and his pious daughter, the mother of Hezekiah, contributed much to keep him pure in the midst of a very corrupt court; for, when he came to be king, “he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did.”

It is said, at the 18th verse, that, “in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, did Sennacherib, king of Assyria, come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.” As the kings of Assyria make a very conspicuous figure in this part of sacred history, it will be advisable to trace them up to their fountain head. They were descended from Assur, the son of Shem, who, we are told, Genesis x. 11, “went out from his brethren, and built Nineveh,” and from him was denominated Assyria, that great country of the east, bounded by Armenia, Media, Mesopotamia, and Babylon; at this day called Yerach, and almost wholly under the dominion of the Turks, which they so named from Erech, one of the first cities of that country, mentioned Gen. x. 10.

The city of Nineveh, situated on the west side of the river Tigris, was the flourishing seat of the Assyrian kings, for above thirteen centuries, till the time of Sardanapalus, who proved such an effeminate prince, that his captains conspired against him, and the two principal leaders in the conspiracy, Belesis and Arbaces, divided his dominions between them.

Belesis had Babylon, Chaldæa, and Arabia: and Arbaces had Nineveh, Media, and all the rest of the divided empire. This Arbaces is, in sacred writ, called Tiglath-pileser, or Thilgath-pilneser, of whom we read 2 Kings xvi., that he assisted king Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, against Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah king of Israel; and, that, to divert Rezin, he laid siege to his capital city, Damascus, took it, slew the king, and carried the people captive.

In the next chapter, the XVIIth, we read how Salmaneser, the son and successor of this Tiglath-pileser, came up against Samaria, the capital city of the kingdom of Israel, and took it, and carried away the tribes of Israel captive, and dispersed them in several cities of the Assyrians and Medes.

While Salmaneser was engaged in the siege of Samaria, Hezekiah, who was now upon the throne of Judah, took the opportunity to recover what had been lost from his kingdom in the reign of his father Ahaz. And, when the Assyrian sent to him to demand the tribute which Ahaz had agreed to pay, annually, to Tiglath-pileser, as his patron and defender, Hezekiah, not thinking himself bound to stand to such agreement, refused to pay it any longer. The sacred history says, verse 7, “He *rebelled* against the king of Assyria, and served him not.” Though the word *rebellion* be now generally taken in a bad sense, for a seditious insurrection and fighting against lawful governors, yet our translators did not design it should be so taken in this place, but only to denote, that this good king would no longer acknowledge himself to be a tributary and dependent of the king of Assyria. The reason why he disowned his dependence upon the Assyrian was, “because he trusted in the Lord God of Israel.”

(verse 5.) He had reformed those abuses and corruptions in religion which prevailed in his father's reign; and which, by the just judgment of God, had subjected him to a foreign yoke*. At present, Hezekiah was safe from the resentment of Salmaneser, whose arms were providentially restrained from Judah, by a war which broke out, at this time, between the Assyrians and the king of Tyre. But, when Salmaneser was dead, and his son Sennacherib succeeded him, he renewed the demand upon Hezekiah for the tribute; and, upon Hezekiah's refusing to pay it, he denounced war against him, and marched with a great army into Judea to fall upon him. Alarmed for his kingdom, Hezekiah sent to Sennacherib to say that he would submit to his terms; but these were so high, that Hezekiah was obliged to take the treasures from the temple, to save it from plunder and destruction, and gave them to Sennacherib.

This, however, did not satisfy him. He sent three of his chief captains, with a great host, and with much threatening, boasting and blasphemy, to oblige Hezekiah to surrender, an account of which is given in the XVIIIth chapter, the 17th verse to the end.

The XIXth chapter, the first lesson at this morning's service, states, that Hezekiah, on receiving this, sent to Isaiah the prophet, to know what he was to do, who returned for answer, that he was not to be afraid of him, for that the Lord would destroy Sennacherib's army, and he should fall in his own land. Sennacherib followed up his message by a *letter* more boasting and blasphemous than his message, which Hezekiah took into the temple, and spread it before the Lord, and prayed, and God gave an answer by

* See Reading, Vol. III. p. 269.

Isaiah, that he and the land should be preserved ; and the army was destroyed the same night by a pestilential blast *, and Sennacherib was assassinated by his own sons in the temple of his idol.

The XXth chapter gives an account of a sickness of Hezekiah, while Jerusalem was besieged, when he was “ sick unto death,” and Isaiah came unto him with a message from God, to set his house in order, for he should die. On this, Hezekiah prayed earnestly to God, who sent him another message by Isaiah, that he should recover, and he would *add unto his days fifteen years*. The king of Babylon sent to congratulate him upon this occasion, when Hezekiah, vainly and foolishly, (for even wise and good men often err,) exhibited all his treasures to the ambassadors : on which God declared that his treasures and his sons should be carried captive to Babylon.

The 20th verse records Hezekiah as the temporal benefactor of his people, that “ he made a pool and a conduit, and brought water into the city ;” for one of the greatest worldly comforts and blessings, is a plentiful supply of good water.

More particulars of the reign of Hezekiah may be learned from the xxixth to the end of the xxxiid chapter of the 2d book of Chronicles, and the xxxvith to the end of the xxxixth chapter of Isaiah.

It is within the recollection of some of my hearers, that, on the Fast Day, October the 19th, 1803, the xxxviith chapter of Isaiah, which is almost word for word the same as 2 Kings xix, was appointed for the first lesson at the morning service ; and it was said, at the time, that it was at the desire of our then

* Called the *Simoom*, for an account of which see, before, Sermon xxxii. Vol. I. p. 508.

good old king, George the III^d, the Hezekiah of his day. We were, then, expecting to be invaded by the boasting and blasphemous tyrant of France, the Sennacherib of the day.

It pleased God, however, soon after, to afflict our sovereign with sickness both of body and mind ; but, early in the year 1804, he began to amend, and “ A Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving to Almighty God, upon the prospect of his Majesty the King’s recovery from his dangerous sickness” was issued out by the proper authority to be used “ on Sunday, the 26th of February *.” After this the King again became afflicted, and a day “ for a General Fast and Humiliation” was fixed for the 25th of May, and a Form of Prayer was sent round, in which the former Prayer and Thanksgiving was inserted, and we were directed to pray to God, “ Have mercy upon thy servant our Sovereign, whom Thou hast repeatedly smitten for the transgressions of his people. We acknowledge, that, for our manifold sins, we are worthy of the severity of thy judgments ; yet, we beseech Thee, incline Thine ear to us, when with penitent and contrite hearts we turn unto Thee ; and remove from our Sovereign and from us, this dreadful visitation. We yield thee thanks and praise,

* On this day an impressive sermon was preached at Woburn chapel, in London, and afterwards published, entitled “ The Case of Hezekiah, considered as a ground of consolation, and a motive to union in prayer, at the present alarming state of the King’s health, and of the British Empire, in a Sermon.” By the Rev. G. A. Thomas, LL.D., Minister of the said Chapel, Prebendary of Lichfield, and Rector of Wickham, Hants. The text is 2 Kings xx. 5., “ Tell Hezekiah, the captain of my people, thus saith the Lord, the God of David, thy Father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears—Behold, I will heal thee.” Dr. Thomas died November 20, in the same year.

O Lord, for the hope and prospect of recovery, which thy mercy already hath afforded in the abatement of his dangerous sickness." But, before the day itself arrived, the king recovered, and an altered form of this prayer was sent round, in which we were directed to say, "We yield thee thanks and praise, O Lord, for thy great mercy already manifested towards us in his recovery from his late dangerous sickness." The prayer went on—"Confirm and establish, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the work which Thou hast begun. Make the light of Thy countenance to shine upon him, and renew in him his perfect strength. Grant that he may long continue a nursing-father to the Church, and Thy minister for good to all his subjects; and, that, in the present crisis, he may be thy blessed instrument of restoring peace to the distracted world. And, when thou hast lengthened his days on earth, in the enjoyment both of domestic happiness and of public peace and prosperity, crown him, O Lord, with everlasting glory in the life to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour."

The first lesson appointed for the morning's service was the xxxviiith chapter of Isaiah, which contains the account of Hezekiah's sickness, his prayer to God, and God's message to him by Isaiah. It is said, at the 2^d verse, "Then Hezekiah turned his face towards the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and said, Remember, now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight: and Hezekiah wept sore. Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy

tears : behold, I WILL ADD UNTO THY DAYS FIFTEEN YEARS. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria : and I will defend this city."

Now it is very remarkable, that the good old king *did live for fifteen years after this* : it was *more* than fifteen, it was *not* sixteen : this day of fast and humiliation, as I have said before, was on the 25th of May, 1804, our lamented king died on the 29th of January, 1820.

Now I do *not* say, that the words of Isaiah, I WILL ADD UNTO THY DAYS FIFTEEN YEARS, were intended by God to be applied by the king and his people, as an *answer* to their prayer, and a promise of a continuation of his life for that period ; but I *do* say, that his life was prolonged for fifteen years ; and it *seems* as if this sentence, in this chapter, was intended by God as a promise. Whether the good king himself had any especial application of these words to his soul, I know not. If he had, the persons to whom he would probably mention it are in their graves—we trust in *heaven*—likewise, the then Archbishop of Canterbury * and Bishop Porteus. Nor am I aware that the appointment of the chapter such an occasion, such words occurring in it, and such a result, have been noticed by any of the writers of his Memoirs, or of Anecdotes concerning him. He was then nearly sixty-six years of age, getting towards *the age of man*, and fifteen years, under his circumstances, was a large addition to them. He died at the age of 81 years and 8 months, having reigned 59 years and 3 months, the longest reign of any of our English Sovereigns, except Henry the III^d, who reigned 63 years. It is true, that his *power of ruling*

* Dr. Moore.

was not continued for that time ; but his mere *life*, though deprived of faculties for government, was, *humanly speaking*, of the greatest importance to this nation, and—*under God*—the means of restoring peace and prosperity to this nation and to the world at large. Nor should it be objected, that the continuance of the life of the king, under his circumstances, was a calamity to himself, if not to the nation ; for, though deprived of his reason, the very wanderings of his mind were *heavenly*, he fancied himself conversing with, and joining in the Hallelujahs of, the blest above.

What I mean to say is *this*, that the appointing of the XXXVIth of Isaiah on the Fast Day in 1803, and, consequently, the application of the boasting and blasphemy of Sennacherib to the then-Emperor of France, and the manner of Hezekiah's receiving it, to the manner in which our good king took it, are indisputable *facts* ; so are the illness of the king, the appointment of the Fast Day in 1804, the King's recovery, the Thanksgiving for it, and the appointment of the XXXVIIth chapter of Isaiah as the first lesson at the morning service, and the after-circumstances of the tyrant being defeated, peace being restored to this nation, and generally to Europe and the world, and the good king's life being prolonged for upwards of *fifteen years* : and, if any peculiar impression of *this verse*, the 5th, was made upon the mind of the king, or of his spiritual advisers, *at the time*, then I should say, that it was *an answer to prayer revealed at the time*, if not, that it was *an answer to prayer, in the event**.

But we must return to our history :

* See this subject noticed again, in the LVth Sermon, for the first Sunday after Christmas.

The XXIst chapter of the 2d book of Kings, gives an account of a melancholy change from Hezekiah's reformation, in the wickedness and corruption of the people by Manasseh and Amon. Manasseh was the son of good Hezekiah, but he walked not in the ways of his father, for he restored the high places which Hezekiah had pulled down, and worshipped Baal, and was guilty of enchantments, and witchcrafts, and of great cruelty. It is supposed, that Isaiah was sawn asunder by his order; and, as his chief men and the people concurred in these, God, by his prophets, denounced the most dreadful judgments upon the nation. In 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11—20, however, we shall find, that Manasseh repented and reformed, and that God was pleased to accept his repentance. What an encouragement to sinners to turn to God, who is so long-suffering, so forgiving!

The XXIIId chapter again affords us some relief from these accounts of bad kings, by introducing us to Josiah, who, following the religion of David, did that which was right before God; he repairs the temple; and Hilkiah, the high priest finds the Book of the Law supposed to be that written by Moses himself; the king, hearing it read, is greatly alarmed at the judgments denounced, and sends to Huldah, the prophetess, to inquire of the Lord, and she prophesieth the destruction of Jerusalem; but, on account of Josiah's piety and his humbling himself, he is promised that *he* should not see it, and that he should be gathered into his grave in peace.

The XXIIId chapter, to the end of the 30th verse, goes on with the history of Josiah, who, having received such a comfortable message from God, set himself to do all he could to promote the reformation, arguing, from the encouragement which he had received, that,

if the people humbled themselves with tenderness of heart, though judgments were determined against Judah, yet they would not come in that generation.

From the 30th verse of the XXIII^d, to the end of the XXIVth chapter, we have an account of the reigns of four kings, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah; of whom Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah were sons to Josiah*; but there was no good king after his death.

In the days of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon came against Judah and took it, and carried the first captives away; now Daniel and his

* King Josiah had four sons, who are thus named 1 Chron. iii. 15, the first-born *Johanan*, the second *Joakim*, the third *Zedekiah*, the fourth *Shallum*. The first of these died, as is justly supposed, before his father, all the rest sat successively upon the throne of Judah. Shallum, though mentioned fourth here, was the same as Jehoahaz, (most of them having two names,) and was the one who succeeded his father, as may be seen by comparing 2 Kings xxiii. 30, with Jeremiah xxii. 11. They might, for some reason, be placed out of the order of their birth, as were the three sons of Noah, and some others in the Jewish genealogies. But Jehoahaz was not the eldest, for he was but twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and reigned but three months. For the king of Egypt, returning, in that time, from Carchusium, whither he went at the end of Josiah's reign, imagining that this Shallum would prove his enemy, and resolving to oblige another, he deposed him, and made his brother Eliakim, whom he named Jehoiakim, king in his stead; who being, at that time, twenty-five years of age, it is plain that he was the elder brother. Jehoiakim reigned eleven years; and, after his decease, his son Jehoiachin was set upon the throne, at eighteen years of age; but, whether by his own people, or by Nebuchadnezzar, is uncertain. This king is called *Jeconiah*, 1 Chron. iii. 16, and *Coniah* Jeremiah, xxii. 24, by way of contempt, as some think. When he had reigned three months and ten days, Nebuchadnezzar came, and carried him, his mother, and the princes, and his treasures captive, and made his uncle Zedekiah king in his stead. (See Reading's Sermons, Vol. III. p. 312—315.)

companions were carried to Babylon, and some date the beginning of the captivity here. The second carrying away of the people was in the reign of Jehoiachin. The prophecy of Jeremiah should be read in connection with this part of the history, particularly the XXIIId, XXVIth, and XXVIIth chapters, as they throw mutual light upon each other.

In the XXVth chapter, we find, that Zedekiah, who had been left in Jerusalem to govern for Nebuchadnezzar, having rebelled against him, Nebuchadnezzar again came up against the city, and took it. A council was held, and Zedekiah was brought to his trial, in which he was found guilty of treachery and rebellion; upon which they slew his sons before him, and then put out his eyes, that no other object might efface the bloody scene from his mind. He was, then, bound in chains, and carried to Babylon, to drag out a miserable existence there. While Jeremiah, in his XXXIIId chapter, the 5th verse, foretold this at Jerusalem, Ezekiel, in his XIIth chapter, the 13th verse, foretold it at Babylon. Jeremiah foretold his going to Babylon, and dying there. Ezekiel foretold, that he should *die* at Babylon, but he should *not see it*; and, so, it came to pass, as he was carried there, but deprived of his eye-sight. The burning of the city and temple had been often foretold by Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel; but this did not happen when the city was taken. A month after, however, the cruel resolution was passed to burn both the city and temple.

At the 27th verse, we are told, that, after Jehoiachin had been detained in prison, in Babylon, for thirty-seven years, Evil-merodach, king of Babylon, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, released him out of prison, and entertained him daily at his own table.

The Jews have a tradition, that Evil-merodach had been cast into prison with Jehoiachin, for his bad government during his father's seven years' distraction; and that this was the reason of his favour and affection to him afterwards. This would be an encouragement to the pious Jews in captivity; and they would look upon it as a token of their approaching deliverance. The last chapter of Jeremiah is almost the same as this, and was designed to throw light upon his prophecy; and the fortieth chapter of Jeremiah should be read in this connection.

After this time, the land lay desolate, and kept a sabbath of seventy years' rest, because they had profaned the sabbath, and neglected the observance of the sabbatical years, when the land should rest every seventh year.

On Sunday last, we beheld *Israel* going into captivity for their sins, as a punishment to them and a warning to others; yet, behold! *Judah* goes on in the same wickedness, and she is carried into captivity likewise. And what were the sins which called this judgment down? Profaning the sabbath, polluting the house of the Lord, mocking the messengers of God, misusing his prophets, and despising his word: and like sins will bring down *like*, or *some* punishment, in every age, and among every people, in every place.

Nations are made up of individuals, and, therefore, the conduct of every individual in a nation is of great importance to it. Most people think themselves of great consequence, when what they conceive to be their own interest is concerned, and they will contend strenuously for it; but, if you remonstrate with them upon their conduct, as being injurious to the community, they will say, What can it

signify what such an obscure, or such a poor, creature, as I, can do? But *every one* is of consequence. When a cup is filled by drops, though each is *but* a drop, yet each contributes to the filling it: and, when it is full, there is *one* which is *too much*, and makes the water of bitterness *overflow*. But *ten* righteous would have saved the city of Sodom. Of what vast importance, then, would have been *one* and *one*, and so on, to the number. Nor did God require that *these* should be such *righteous*, as when he said, “There is none righteous, no not one,” (Psalm xiv. 3. Rom. iii. 10.) meaning when tried by the test of absolute purity; but such righteous as Lot and his wife and daughters; good, when compared with the grievous sinners around them, but subject to the infirmities and frailties of man.

It is “righteousness which exalteth a nation,” or any community; and “sin is a reproach to any people.” (Prov. xiv. 34.) Let *us*, then, my brethren, pray to God to make *us* “holy in all manner of conversation,” to make us “holy as he is holy;” (1 Peter i. 15, 16.) that, for our own sakes, and the sake of our neighbourhood and our country, we may be a holy people, serving God here, and, through the example and merits of Christ, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit, we may keep our way here, that we may, finally, dwell with the holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, where perfect holiness—holiness attained through the blood of the Lamb—is alone to be found.

SERMON XXXVII.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—JEREMIAH I—XXIII. 8.

TWO BOOKS OF CHRONICLES—EZRA—NEHEMIAH—ESTHER—
JOB—ECCLESIASTES—SONG OF SOLOMON—JEREMIAH.

JEREMIAH V. 23—25.

This people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us, now, fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.

IN pursuing our Commentary on the Old Testament, according to the course of the Sunday lessons, we, on Sunday last, finished the 2d book of Kings. The lessons for this day are from the book of the prophet Jeremiah, the vth and the xxiid chapters. I will now, therefore, take a brief notice of the books which we pass over; and, then, enter upon the book of Jeremiah.

The two books of CHRONICLES are comprised by the Jews in one book, which they call by a name signifying *The words of the day*, or *The Journals*; probably, from the circumstance of their being compiled out of *diaries*, or *annals*, in which were recorded the various events related in these books. They are, evidently, taken from others, which were written at

different times, some before, and others after the Babylonish captivity ; and the author, therefore, must have lived after the captivity, and obtained his materials from writers who lived at the same time with the events recorded, and long before his time. The authenticity of these books is abundantly supported by the general mass of outward evidence, by which, also, their divine authority is fully established, as well as by the indirect proof of our Lord and his apostles referring to persons and events recorded in them.

The principal object of these books is, to set forth with accuracy the genealogies, the rank, the duties and the order of the priests and Levites ; that, after the captivity, they might more easily return to their proper ranks and ministry. The author had, farther, in view to shew how the lands had been distributed among the families before the captivity ; so that the respective tribes might, on their return, obtain, as far as was practicable, the ancient inheritance of their fathers. The Chronicles are an abridgment of the sacred history ; but, more especially, from the origin of the Jewish nation to their return from the first captivity. The *first* book traces the rise and propagation of the people of Israel from Adam, and, afterwards, gives a particular account of the reign and transactions of David. In the *second* book, the narrative is continued, and relates the progress and destruction of the kingdom of Judah, and the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. As very little notice is taken of the kings of *Israel*, it is not improbable, that this book was chiefly taken from the records of the kingdom of Judah. The period of time included in the books of Chronicles is about 3468 years ; and may be conveniently divided into

four parts, namely,—Ist. The genealogies of those persons through whom the Messiah was to descend, from Adam to the captivity, and to the time of Ezra, the Ist chapter to the end of the 34th verse of the IXth chapter.—IId. The histories of Saul and David, from chapter IX. verse 35, to XXIX. 22.—IIId. The account of Solomon's reign, XXIX. 23. to the end of 2 Chron. IXth.—IVth. The history of the kingdom of Judah after the separation of the ten tribes from Rehoboam, under Jeroboam, to its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar.

At the close of this book, as well as at the end of the second book of Kings, we have an account of the Jews being in captivity at Babylon, and have no farther historical account of them. The behaviour of many of them there was very bad, as appears by Ezekiel, yet they were reformed from idolatry, and never fell into it again. Their captivity in Babylon was a means of spreading the knowledge of God there, as appears from the history of Daniel, who, with several others, were promoted to considerable places in the kingdom; and this was the dawning of their deliverance. Jeremiah, in his xxixth chapter, the 10th verse, had foretold the destruction of the king and empire of Babylon, and the return of the Jews, after seventy years. This was accomplished by the taking of Babylon, and the death of Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, as related in the vth chapter of the book of Daniel. Upon the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, the king of Persia, he made his uncle Cyaxares, there called Darius, the Median, king of Babylon. He reigned two years; and, after his death, Cyrus took the kingdom himself, and reigned over all Persia and the country that had been subject to the kings of Assyria and Baby-

lon. Cyrus had knowledge of the true God; and Josephus says, that Daniel had shewn him Isaiah's prophecies concerning him, in his XLth chapter, and 28th verse, and XLVth chapter 1—4.: and, therefore, in gratitude to God, who had given him success, and agreeable to his commands, he was determined to fulfil the prophecy, and made the proclamation, mentioned in the 1st chapter of the book of Ezra, for the return of the Jews and the rebuilding of the temple.

EZRA was the son of Seraiah, who was, probably, the high priest slain at the burning of the temple, and was a priest and ready scribe in the law of God. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were, anciently, reckoned by the Jews as one volume, and were divided by them into the first and second books of Ezra. It is evident, that the author of the book of Ezra was personally present at the transactions recorded in it, the narrative being, for the most part, in the first person. It, also, bears upon the face of it every character of natural simplicity, and contains more particulars of time, persons, and places, than could have been introduced by any other individual. That the last four chapters of this book were written by Ezra himself there can be no doubt, as he particularly describes himself, in the beginning of the VIIth chapter, and, likewise, frequently introduces himself in the following chapters.

The book of Ezra harmonizes most strictly with the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, on which it throws great light, as you will see, if you will compare Ezra v. with Hagg. i. 12, and Zech. iii. and iv. It shews the fatherly care of Jehovah over his chosen people, whose history it relates from the time of the edict issued by Cyrus, to

the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus,—a period of about seventy-nine years, according to some, but of one hundred years, according to other historians.

This book consists of two principal divisions: the first, contained in the 1st chapter to the end of the VIth chapter, gives an account of the return of the Jews from Babylon, under the conduct of Zerubbabel, when above forty thousand returned, most of whom were of the *two* tribes, but many, also, of the *ten*. In the first place, they restore the worship of God; and, for that end, build the altar of burnt offerings; that, so, they might make daily expiation for their sins, and intercession for their wants; they, also, laid the foundation of the temple; when, being opposed by the Samaritans, and slanderously accused to the king of Persia, they are commanded to desist for the present; but, afterwards, being encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, they advance in their former work, obtain a new commission and authority, and proceed to the finishing of it.

The second division of the book, the VIIth chapter, to the end, gives an account how Ezra is sent by Artaxerxes with a large commission to manage and govern all things for the welfare and interest of the Jews. He was attended by many others, and they carried great treasures along with them, and offerings to the temple. When they were come to Jerusalem, the princes inform Ezra of great abuses, both among priests and people, by marrying heathen idolatrous wives, contrary to the law, which Ezra bewails in prayer to God, and obliges them to put them away, though by some of them they had children. They did not put away the children, but

carefully educated them in the knowledge of the true God.

The commission of Ezra lasted for twelve, or thirteen years. When his authority expired, he retired into a private station, and was succeeded by Nehemiah, who speaks of him as if he assisted him in the affairs of the nation. The great work universally ascribed to Ezra, is the collecting and revising of the Hebrew Scriptures, which he did, with the assistance of the men of the great synagogue, as they are called, who, thence, became the guardians of the holy writings. Ezra styles himself, vii. 6, a ready scribe in the law; a character which peculiarly fitted him for such a work.

The memory of Ezra was ever revered among the Jews, who considered him as a second Moses. He is not styled expressly a prophet, but he wrote under the influence of the Divine Spirit, according to the opinion of those who admitted his writings into the sacred catalogue. He is said to have died in the one hundred and twentieth year of his age; and to have been buried at Jerusalem.

The Book of NEHEMIAH is a continuation of the Jewish history from the end of Ezra. Nehemiah speaks all along in his own person; and there seems no reason to doubt, that the whole was written by him.

Nehemiah was of the tribe of Levi, and born at Babylon during the captivity; he could not be the Nehemiah mentioned by Ezra, ii. 2, among those who returned with Zerubbabel; for this would make him more than one hundred years old, when he entered on his commission in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus. He must have been a distinguished

person, to be promoted to the office of cup-bearer to the king; and be intrusted with the commission of governor of Judea. He continued for twelve years in his government; and, at the expiration of it, he returned to Shushan, conformably to the promise he had made. It is not exactly known what time he remained in Persia. Some suppose it about five years. He, then, returned to Judea, and there spent the remainder of his life. He was, perhaps, the last governor appointed by the kings of Persia; who left the government afterwards to the high-priest.

Nehemiah is considered, by the Jews, as one of the great synagogue, who put the last hand to the Hebrew catalogue of Scripture, by adding this book of Nehemiah, which is the last that was written of all the books of the *Old* Testament. The book may be conveniently divided into *four* parts, the *first*, containing the 1st, and to the end of the 11th verse of the II^d chapter, which gives an account of the departure of Nehemiah from Shushan, with a royal commission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and his first arrival there. The *second*, from the 12th verse of the II^d chapter, to the end of the 4th verse of the VIIth chapter, containing an account of the building of the walls, notwithstanding the hindrance made to it by Sanballat. The *third*, from the 5th verse of the VIIth chapter, to the end of the XIIth chapter, containing an account of the first reformation accomplished by Nehemiah. The *fourth*, the XIIIth chapter, containing an account of the second reformation accomplished by Nehemiah, on his second return to Jerusalem, and his correction of the abuses which had crept in during his absence.

The history of Nehemiah is peculiarly worthy our regard; the story itself being remarkable, and the

manner of relating it particularly pious and pleasing. He was a man of great devotion, and of great courage and zeal : no historian is fuller of sentiments of piety and devout acknowledgments of the hand and care of God.

The commonwealths of Greece and Rome were now come to considerable eminence. Plato, Demosthenes, and other celebrated names in the heathen world, were now living, but the character of Nehemiah far exceeds them all.

The Book of ESTHER gives an account of a plot laid against the Jews to destroy them, and the very wonderful appearance of Providence in defeating it. Some have supposed that the book was written by Mordecai ; but the most probable supposition is, that it was written by Ezra, as the transactions here recorded relate to Artaxerxes Longimanus mentioned by Ezra, vii. 23, and who is, probably, the same with Ahasuerus mentioned in this book ; and we may, therefore, conclude, that the permission given to Nehemiah, to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, was owing to the influence of Esther and Mordecai ; and that the freeing the Jews from the Persian yoke was gradually, though silently, effected by the same influence ; and it is not improbable, that the pious reasons, given by Artaxerxes (Ezra vii. 23.) for the regulations given to Ezra, arose out of the right notions respecting Jehovah, which were communicated to him by his queen Esther.

The history contained in this book comes in between the VIth and VIIth chapters of Ezra ; it begins about the year of the world 3544, and continues through a space not exceeding eighteen, or twenty, years.

It is very extraordinary, that there is no mention

of the name of God in it, considering how remarkably his providence appeared in behalf of the Jews, and how constantly other inspired writers take notice of the divine interposition. It, certainly, contains an illustrious instance of God's singular care of his church in its greatest difficulties; and how he disposes all affairs and events, so as to promote his own glory, and the welfare of his church and people: "Verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless there is a God that governs the earth." (Psalm lviii. 11.) It also, furnishes many useful instructions.

The five following books, *Job*, the *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and the *Canticles*, or *Song of Solomon*, are more simply and entirely religious, and declare to us the will of God in a more doctrinal way. They are called *the Poetical Books*, because, in the original, they are written in *metre*, or *verse*, and in a more lofty style. In the Jewish Scriptures they were called the *Hagiographa*, or *Holy Writings*, as being more particularly instructive and holy. An excellent writer thus distinguishes them: "Job is doctrinal, the Psalms devotional, the Proverbs practical, Ecclesiastes penitential, and Canticles experimental*."

From *Job*, *Ecclesiastes*, and the *Song of Solomon* no Sunday Lessons are taken: nor yet, as you well know, from the Psalms; but we read *them* constantly in another part of the service. The Proverbs we read from the afternoon of the 21st to the end of the 26th Sunday after Trinity. But it is my intention,—should it please God to continue my life, and ability, and inclination,—as I pray that he may,—

* See Bickersteth, p. 38.

when I have gone through the Old Testament according to the Sunday Lessons, and, likewise, the New Testament, to return to some of those books which we pass over, now, with only a slight notice, and give them a more full consideration; and we must rest satisfied, now, with touching only very briefly on *Job*, *Ecclesiastes*, and the *Song of Solomon*.

JOB is, commonly, supposed to have lived before, or in the time of, Moses, and the account of him to have been written either by himself, or Moses; or, perhaps, first by himself, and, then, adopted by Moses for the instruction of the Israelites. The book contains an account of Job's piety—his prosperity—his trials and afflictions—his debates with his friends—his self-justification—God's address to Job—his self-condemnation—and restoration to greater prosperity than before. We see in Job an eminent type of the suffering and glorified Saviour, and a pattern, of the believer's passing through much tribulation. Job's patience, and his faith in a Divine living Redeemer—as set forth chapter XIX. 25—27,—are exemplary. We see, too, how unprofitable are religious debates, when conducted in a spirit of contention and self-justification.

The book called ECCLESIASTES is supposed to have been written by Solomon, at the close of his life, and is the book of his repentance. It shews us that no created good can satisfy the soul, and that happiness is to be found in GOD ALONE. No one ever had such advantages as Solomon for proving these truths; and he, here, as a penitent, wise, and faithful preacher, gives us the conclusions drawn from his own experience.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON is supposed to have been

written by himself, on his marriage, and is commonly understood to represent the mutual love of Christ and the church, under the well-known and endearing figure of a bridegroom and bride. The bridegroom is considered as pointing out Christ; his friends, the angels and ministers; the bride, the church of Christ; and her companions, all who seek to belong to the church. We have a lively representation of the spiritual state of Christ's church in this world, and of its various experiences. It is impossible that a natural, or unconverted, man should understand this book. None but those who can truly say of Christ, This is my beloved, and This is my friend, are qualified to read it with advantage. There is an excellent volume of Sermons on the Song of Solomon, by Romaine.

ISAIAH stands the first of the prophets; but, as he treats so fully of the coming and the birth of Christ, as to have obtained the name of *the evangelical prophet*, or the fifth Evangelist, the church passes the book over now, in order to begin it on the first Sunday in Advent. I should have wished, before I begin to consider the writings of the prophets, to have made a few general observations on the prophetic books,—on the different kinds of prophets mentioned in the Scriptures,—on the situation of the prophets, and their manner of living—on the nature of the prophetic inspiration,—on the collection of their writings, and the mode of delivering their prophecies,—and on the number and order of the prophetic books,—But, as I have already had so many subjects to treat in this discourse, I must defer this till we come to consider the prophecy of Isaiah. We proceed, then, now, to JEREMIAH.

And, indeed, in respect to this book, so much

might be said, and so much seems to be required to be said, that it is difficult to shorten it to any moderate compass. I will, however, attempt it.

The prophet Jeremiah tells us himself, i. 1, that he was the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests of Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin, about three miles north of Jerusalem. He, also, tells us, that he began to prophesy in the 13th year of king Josiah, and prophesied, from thence, till the 11th of Zedekiah, making about forty-one years; and he still continued to exercise his office of prophet among the Jews, who went into Egypt, after the murder of Gedaliah.

He appears to have been very young when he was called to the office of a prophet, from which he, modestly, endeavoured to excuse himself, by pleading his youth and incapacity; but, being overruled by the divine authority, he set himself to discharge the duties of his office with unremitting diligence and fidelity. In the course of his ministry, he met with great difficulties and opposition from his countrymen of all degrees, whose persecution and ill-usage had, sometimes, such an effect upon his mind as to draw from him expressions, in the bitterness of his soul, which many have thought it difficult to reconcile with his religious principles; but which, when duly weighed, may be found to claim our pity, rather than blame. He was, in truth, a man of unblemished piety and integrity; a warm lover of his country, whose miseries he laments; and so affectionately attached to his countrymen, notwithstanding their injurious treatment of him, that he chose rather to abide with them, and undergo all hardships in their company, than, separated from them, to enjoy a state of ease and plenty, which the favour of the king of Babylon would have secured to him.

The idolatrous apostacy, and other sins of the people of Judah, and the severe judgments which God was preparing to inflict upon them, though not without a distant prospect of future restoration and deliverance, form the principal subjects of his prophecies; except the XLVth chapter which relates to Baruch; and the six following chapters, which declare what was to befall some particular heathen nations.

His prophecies were spoken, or written, at different times; and it is evident, from various passages of the book, that there were *four* distinct collections of them.

The *first* was that mentioned xxxvi. 2, and made by divine command, in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim. The *second* is that mentioned xxxii. 2; and, as may be inferred, from xxxviii. 1, after the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah. The *third* made soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, as appears, i. 1—3. The *fourth* containing chapters XL to XLIV, inclusive. The LIId chapter was, probably, added by Ezra as a preface to the book of Lamentations.

From this statement, it is plain, that the prophecies of Jeremiah, as we have them, are not placed in the order of time in which they were delivered; the cause of this it is, now, impossible to ascertain. It might arise from misplacing the separate parchments, or leathers, upon which they were written, on the roll, and their being so transcribed, afterwards, on to one roll, or book; and to get them now into the proper order of time, it will be necessary to arrange them under the reigns of the different kings in which they were delivered.

This would make the *first* division to consist of

the prophecies delivered in the reign of *Josiah*, containing the 1st, to the end of the xiith chapter.

The *second*, those delivered in the reign of *Jehoiakim*, containing chapters xiii. to the end of the xxth, the xxiid, xxiiid, xxxvth, xxxvith, xlvth, to the end of the xlviiiith, and the xlixth, to the end of verse 33.

The *third*, those delivered in the reign of *Zedekiah*, including chapters xxi., xxiv., xxvii., to the end of xxxiv., xxxvii., to the end of xxxix., xlix., 34—39, and l., li.

The *fourth*, those delivered under the government of *Gedaliah*, containing chapters xl. to the end of xlv.

This statement is made, not in the expectation that you will be able to understand it, from hearing it thus delivered from the pulpit; but, to make you aware that there are such misplacings and difficulties in this book, and that those who have ability and the opportunity, may, if they wish it, consult some Bible with a *Commentary*.

We will, now, then, as, perhaps, the best way upon the whole, turn over the chapters, and see what is the purport of each.

The 1st contains the prophet's general commission, and God's promises of his assistance.

In the IIId, and to the end of the 5th verse of the IIIId chapter, the prophet represents to the Jews their ingratitude to God, their unparalleled wickedness, and the dishonour they were bringing upon themselves by it.

The next prophecy is the IIIId chapter, and the 6th verse, to the end of the 2d verse of the IVth chapter, in order to understand which, we must bear in mind, that it refers to the time of *Josiah*, a very

zealous reformer; but the people were not hearty in his reformation; they only complied with it outwardly, and, after his death, again fell into idolatry.

The prophecy, from the 3d verse of the IVth chapter, to the end of it, is addressed to Judah and Jerusalem; is a call to repentance, and foretells their destruction by the Chaldeans. In the Vth chapter, the first lesson at this morning's service, the prophet goes on to represent the degeneracy of the people, and the calamities which were coming upon them; and the subject is continued in the VIth chapter.

In the VIIth chapter, to the end of the IXth, is another prophecy, in which the prophet begins with an exhortation to amendment of life, without which their confidence in the temple is declared to be in vain, and bewails the dreadful miseries which were coming upon them.

Of the Xth chapter some suppose that it was written after the first captivity in Jehoiakim's time, when Daniel and others were carried captive, and is, verse 1—17, an address to those captives, concerning the heathen among whom they were settled; and, that the rest of the chapter concerns those who remained in the land, and might think themselves safe.

In the XIth chapter, in order to reclaim the people, their attention is called to the covenant made with their fathers.

In the XIIth chapter, the first six verses relate to the close of the foregoing, concerning Jeremiah's danger from the men of Anathoth; the remainder relates to God's intentions of mercy towards his people, notwithstanding their desolations.

The XIIIth chapter contains an entire prophecy. Under the symbol of a linen girdle, left to rot near Euphrates, it foretells the manner in which the glory of the Jews shall be marred during their long captivity in Chaldea.

The XIVth foretells a drought, which would greatly distress Judea; the prophet makes confession and supplication for pardon; God declares his purpose to punish; and the prophet bewails their misery.

In the XVth chapter, in reply to their request, God assures them, that nothing could divert him from his purpose of punishing so wicked a people. Accordingly their fate is again declared; the prophet complains of being obliged to deliver such messages; he is reproved for this; but he appeals to God for his sincerity, and supplicates pardon; upon which God promises to protect him in the faithful discharge of his duty.

In the XVIth chapter the prophet foretells the utter ruin of the Jews. And

In the XVIIth, the 1st, to the end of the 18th verse, he shews the fatal consequences of idolatry, the happiness of the man that trusts in God, and the vanity of riches, which often disappoint the owner; the prophet appeals to God for his sincerity, and prays, that the evil intended by his enemies may return on their own heads. The remainder relates to the due observance of the sabbath.

In the XVIIIth chapter, God, under the type of a potter, shews his absolute power in disposing of nations, and threatens judgments to Judah.

In the XIXth chapter, by the significant type, or emblem, of breaking the potter's vessel, Jeremiah is

directed to foretell the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. The prophets frequently taught by typical *actions*, as well as by *words*.

In the XXth chapter, Pashur, (whose name signified *increasing liberty*, or *spreading brightness*), for smiting Jeremiah, receives the new name of Magor-missabib, or *fear round about*, and a dreadful doom is pronounced upon him; and Jeremiah complains on account of the difficulties and persecutions he met with in the discharge of his office.

The prophecy in the XXIst chapter, and to the end of the 9th verse of the XXIIId, is transposed, as are many of the following. They relate to events which happened in some former reign; whereas this relates to the reign of Zedekiah, when Jerusalem was besieged by the Chaldeans; the Egyptians came to help the Jews, and the Chaldeans drew off their forces and raised the siege: in this interval, this prophecy was written.

The XXIIId chapter is the first lesson at this evening's service, and the remainder of it contains the judgment of Shallum, of Jehoiakim and of Coniah. The subject is continued in the XXIIIId chapter, to the end of the 8th verse, in which the prophet goes on to threaten the rulers and guides of the people, but concludes with promises of deliverances from captivity, of better times under the Messiah, and of a future restoration of the Jews to their own land.

I must conclude with a brief application:

These prophecies, though pronounced, originally, against the Jews and other nations, are, nevertheless, profitable reading, both for individuals and communities. We should ask ourselves, as we read, Am *I*, as an individual, or are *we*, as a people, guilty of this, or this sin, which the prophet reproves? As,

for instance, in those verses I have taken for my text, v. 23—25, “Do we fear the Lord our God, who giveth rain, both the former and the latter in his season, who reserveth unto *us* the appointed weeks of the harvest?” Have *you*, during the late harvest, shewn, that *you* love and fear God, and are grateful to Him for all these blessings? Were your *rejoicings*, at the conclusion, made *in the fear of God*? Were they with a sober, pious joy? or in riot and drunkenness? Beware, lest “Your iniquities turn away these blessings, and your sins withhold good things from you.”

Once more, in those verses of the XXIII^d chapter, the 5th, to the end of the 8th verse, (which are the portion for the Epistle on the Sunday next before Advent), Do we receive the righteous branch of David, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, as THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS? Do we renounce all righteousness of our own? that is, Do we, every one, acknowledge, that we are sinners before God, and that “there is none righteous, no not one,” (Rom. iii. 10,) and that we must appear before Him in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that we must accept *that* as our only hope; and, that, in *that*, God will accept us for Christ’s sake?

SERMON XXXVIII

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—JEREMIAH XXIII. 9.—
LII. AND LAMENTATIONS.

JEREMIAH'S BOLDNESS—FALSE PROPHETS—THE RECHABITES
—JEHOIAKIM'S DESTROYING THE BOOK OF THE WORD OF
GOD — ZEDEKIAH — NEBUCHADNEZZAR — LAMENTATIONS—
THE SACRED ELEGY—THE SORROW OF THE MESSIAH.

JEREMIAH XXXV. 18, 19.

And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you ; therefore, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

ON Sunday last, we concluded at the end of the 8th verse of the xxiiid chapter of Jeremiah ; the first lessons, this day, are the xxxvth and xxxvith chapters ; and, on Sunday next, we proceed to Ezekiel ; we have, therefore, this day, to consider the remainder of Jeremiah, beginning at the xxiiid chapter and the 9th verse.

The prophet, here, exhorts the people not to listen to false prophets, and threatens the pretenders to inspiration and the scoffers at true prophecy.

In the XXIVth chapter, under the emblem of two baskets of figs, one good, the other bad, it is declared,

for the encouragement of the prophet, and the pious people in the land, that, though all should suffer, God would make a distinction between the precious and the vile.

The XXVth chapter contains a prophecy of the destruction of Judea and the neighbouring countries by Nebuchadnezzar.

The XXVIth chapter gives an account of the danger into which Jeremiah was brought for delivering faithfully his message from the Lord. He was ordered to “stand in the court of the Lord’s house,” probably at one of the solemn feasts, “and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord’s house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word.” On his doing this, “the priests, and the prophets, and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die,” and they would have put him to death, if God had not influenced the heart of Ahikam, a person of great weight in the court, to interfere and rescue him. And, so, would sinners do, now, to those who declare to them the whole counsels of God, if they were not restrained by the laws of the land.

In the XXVIIth chapter, under the type of bonds and yokes, Jeremiah foretells the subduing of the neighbouring kings by Nebuchadnezzar.

In the XXVIIIth chapter, Hananiah, a false prophet, by the action of breaking the yoke which Jeremiah had put on, contradicts Jeremiah’s prophecy, and says, that, within two years, God would break the yoke of the king of Babylon, and restore the king and the vessels of the Lord’s house; when Jeremiah informs him from God, that, for this, the yokes of wood should be changed to yokes of iron,

and that he, Hananiah, should die in the year, and which happened in two months.

The XXIXth chapter contains a letter from Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon, and the horrible end of Ahab and Zedekiah, two lying prophets, whom, it is said, verse 22, “the king of Babylon roasted in the fire:” probably they were treated in the same way as was intended for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; but there was no “Son of God” to save *the opposers* of the Lord from the fury of the flames.

The latter part of the chapter, from the 24th verse, gives an account of the punishment of Shemaiah, another false prophet.

The XXXth and XXXIst chapters contain gracious promises of God to Israel, and that he would remember the covenant made with their fathers. It is difficult to say, whether these promises refer to their return from captivity, or to gospel times: perhaps the former part of the XXXIst chapter, to the end of the 26th verse, may refer to their return from Babylon, and the remainder to their conversion in the last days. A part of this chapter, the 1st to the end of the 18th verse, is the first lesson at the morning service on the day of the Holy Innocents, in which Rachel—or, as she is called here, *Rahel*—is represented weeping for her children; and the whole chapter is the first lesson in the afternoon of the Thursday before Easter.

At the 22d verse, we have a distinct prediction of the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ, “the seed of the woman,” (Gen. iii. 15.) particularly so called, because not the offspring of an earthly father. And, at the 31st to the end of the 36th verse, (and also XXXIII. 8.) the efficacy of Christ’s atonement,

the spiritual character of the new covenant, and the inward efficacy of the Gospel, are most forcibly described ; as may be more particularly seen, by comparing it with St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, viii. 8—13, and x. 16.

In the XXXIIId chapter we have an account of Jeremiah's imprisonment, and his complaint to God, the prophecy of the captivity is confirmed, and the promise of a gracious return is given.

In the XXXIIId chapter God again promises the Jews a gracious return from captivity, a settled government, and in due time, as at the beginning of the XXIIId chapter, Christ the Branch of Righteousness.

While Jerusalem was besieged, the Egyptians came to help Zedekiah, and the Chaldeans drew off to fight the Egyptians ; during this time, the events related in the XXXIVth chapter happened. Jeremiah informs Zedekiah, that the city should be taken and burnt ; that he should not, however, be put to death, but be carried to Babylon, and die there. Zedekiah and the Jews, terrified at the threatenings of Jeremiah, shewed some tokens of repentance, and set the Jewish slaves at liberty, as the law of God directed them to do every seven years. But, soon after, when the Chaldeans had retired, and the rulers thought the danger was over, they reduced again to a state of slavery those that had been released ; whereupon Jeremiah declared to them, that, because of their hypocrisy, and the breaking of their vow, God would cause the Chaldeans to return, who should burn Jerusalem, and put its inhabitants to death, and lay the whole country waste.

The XXXVth chapter, the first lesson at this morning's service, gives an account of a very interesting

scene which took place in one of the chambers of the temple. There was, living amongst the Israelites, a family, or people, called the Rechabites, so named from Rechab, the father of Jonadab, of whom we read, 2 Kings x. 16., when Jehu met him, and took him up in his chariot, that he might see his zeal for the Lord. These Rechabites, it seems, were a branch of the Kenites, of whom we read Judges iv. 11, and who were descended, from Hobab, who was, either the same as Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, or else Jethro's son. They dwelt in tents, and moved about from place to place, with their flocks and herds, as the patriarchs had done; but, upon the approach of Nebuchadnezzar, with his army of Chaldeans, they retreated into Jerusalem, thinking they should be more safe there, than in the open country. Now, God ordered Jeremiah to take them into a chamber, in a public part of the temple, and to set pots full of wine and cups before them, and to desire them to drink; and which he, accordingly, did. And what was the result? Did they immediately begin, and drink, and sit on, and drink, and drink, and begin to curse, and to swear, and blaspheme, and drink on, and make themselves worse than the beasts, and then go away and make a riot, and go home to their families, a shame and a nuisance? No. "They said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us," about three hundred years before this time, "saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons, forever: Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be stran-

gers. Thus, have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he hath charged us."

From this example of unnecessary abstemiousness, God takes occasion to reprove the men of Judah. There was no harm in drinking wine *in moderation*,—there was no harm in building houses, and planting vineyards, and having fields and sowing seed,—nor had Jonadab any right to bind his posterity by any such laws: but, still, his children, and their posterity, even to the distance of three hundred years after him, out of a respectful, and affectionate, and pious regard for him, resolve to observe his commands: and they do it *effectually*; they do not *profess* to do it, and neglect it, and act contrary; they say at once, openly and fearlessly, "We will drink no wine,—We will build no houses,—We will plant no vineyard,—We will have no field." And God, in reward of this filial piety, declares that "Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before him for ever:" that is, they shall continue to be a people a long time; or, perhaps, the meaning may be, none of them shall be slain in the destruction of the city; according to the marginal reading, "there shall not a man be cut off from Jonadab the son of Rehab, to stand before me for ever."

You, who have wine and strong drink set before you, and are pressed to drink, with "Come, it will do you no hurt," and such like expressions, and had rather not take it, but are fearful to say so, think of the *Rechabites*, "We will drink no wine." Their father Jonadab, only, had commanded *them*, Your Heavenly Father has commanded you: he permits you, indeed, to *drink*, and even to ENJOY; but he

says that drunkenness is a sin, that the drunkard shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, but shall be cast into everlasting burnings.

Thus should *you* reason and act upon every one of God's commands.

But, to us CHRISTIANS, there is one consideration which seems to press upon us with peculiar force. When our blessed Redeemer came upon earth to suffer death upon the cross for our sins, and to ransom us from death and hell, and bring us to heaven and God, the night before he was to suffer, as he sat partaking of the passover with his disciples, he took *bread* and blessed it, and brake it, and gave to each of them, saying this is my *body* which is given for you, eat this in remembrance of me, and he took a cup of *wine*, in like manner, and blessed that, and desired them to drink it in remembrance of his *blood* shed for them.

Now, my brethren, I ask you,—I address every one who is arrived at years of discretion, have *you* obeyed the commands of Him who laid down his life for you, and taken this bread and this wine, in faith and repentance, in remembrance of Him? If not, the Rechabites shall condemn you in the judgment, and Christ's death shall avail you nothing. You *drink* the cup of THE DEVIL, you *refuse* the cup of SALVATION.

The XXXVIth chapter, which I have just read, as the first lesson at this evening's service, gives an account of a transaction of still greater interest and concern. Jeremiah was ordered by the Lord to write down what he had revealed to him respecting Israel and Judah, and to declare it to them. On this, Jeremiah desired Baruch, the scribe, who, it seems, commonly wrote for him, to write down as

he pronounced; and, as Jeremiah was prevented going into the house of the Lord, either because he was a prisoner, or, on some account, was forbidden to go there, he desired Baruch to go “on the fasting day,” that is the great day of atonement, and read them to all the people, and, also, to “read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities,” that is, probably, to read them at the gates of the cities, where the people commonly met on public occasions. This he seems to have done; and, after about a year, a fast was held, perhaps to supplicate God to remove the drought, mentioned xiv. 1, 2. Here Baruch read it again, in the temple, in the chamber of Gemariah, probably, from some window, or balcony. The princes, hearing of it, desired to hear it themselves, and, on hearing it, were alarmed, and resolved to tell Jehoiakim, the king; but, fearing the consequence to Jeremiah and Baruch, they desired them to hide themselves, and told the king, who desired to hear it; and, on Jehudi reading it to him, he was so much exasperated at it, that he took a pen-knife and cut it, and threw it into the fire, and burnt it, notwithstanding the princes had intreated he would not do so, and he would have put Jeremiah and Baruch to death could he have found them.

What folly! what impiety!! what blasphemy!!! As if there were any fighting against God! as if the Word of God should not stand whatever man may do! Had not Jeremiah already proved a true prophet? Jehoiakim might avert the judgment, by humbling himself, and by repentance, but not by rebellion, or shutting his eyes against it. He increased his condemnation, for God ordered Jeremiah, again, to write the same words in a fresh book,

or roll, and to *add* unto them “many like words,” or to pronounce more and heavier judgments.

You are astonished, probably, at the impiety of Jehoiakim. But, have *you* never seen any thing like it in people in these days? Have *you* never done any thing like it *yourselves*?

The Word of God comes to *you*. Here it is, in THE BIBLE. Do you receive it, as you ought, with respect and reverence? Do you read and hear it with a view to learn what is the will of God, and to do it? None who are *here*, I trust, ever treat it with disrespect, and contempt and blasphemy; but, Have you seen none who do? none who never come to hear it? none who never read it at home? none who ridicule it? none who say, It is not true? none who have blasphemed it? And, if you *have*, in what respect are they better than Jehoiakim? But, whether people neglect, or despise, or blaspheme the Scriptures, be assured one jot, or one tittle of God’s Word shall not fail; but, to those who will not hear his first warnings, there shall be *added* “many like words” of “lamentations and mourning and woe. (Ezek. ii. 10.)

In the XXXVIIth chapter we read that the Egyptian army came out of Egypt against the Chaldeans, and obliged them to draw off from the siege of Jerusalem; on this, Zedekiah sends to Jeremiah, who prophesies the return of the Chaldeans and their victory; upon which he is beaten and put into prison.

In the XXXVIIIth chapter is given the account of Jeremiah’s confinement in the dungeon, Ebed-melech’s success in getting it mitigated, and his counsel to the king to surrender to the Chaldeans.

Zedekiah wished to attend to him, and follow his

advice ; but he was afraid, that, if he did so, the Jews who had fallen to the Chaldeans would *mock*, would *laugh at* him ; but Jeremiah assures him, that, if he did not, he should become so much more the mock, even of the women.

There are few of Satan's devices more successful than *the laugh of the world*. It has more influence in this fallen world than the Word of God. Say to an unregenerate man, " You must not do so, it is a *sin*, it is against the commandment of God," and what effect has it ? None. But, if he wishes to do what is *right*, to fulfil the commandment of God, say to him, " If you do so, the world will laugh at you," and he does it not. My brethren—particularly you, my younger ones,—depend upon it that you cannot be children of God,—you cannot be true Christians,—till you can bear the laugh of the world, and regulate your conduct by God's Word.

In the XXXIXth chapter is given the account of Jerusalem being taken, of Zedekiah's having his eyes put out, and being sent to Babylon, of the city being ruined, and the people taken captive.

The XLth and XLIst chapters state, that Jeremiah, having been taken captive in Jerusalem, is set free by Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard to Nebuchadnezzar, and he goes to Gedaliah. The dispersed Jews come to Gedaliah, and inform him of Ishmael's conspiracy to kill him ; which he will not believe, but which accordingly takes place.

In the XLIIId and XLIIIId chapters Johanan and the remnant of the people desire Jeremiah to ask counsel of God what they should do ; the prophet assures them, that they should be safe, if they continued in Judea ; but that they should be destroyed,

if they went into Egypt ; nevertheless the leading men carry the people there ; and the prophet foretells the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, and the destruction of the gods of the Egyptians.

In the XLIVth chapter Jeremiah reproves the Jews in Egypt for continuing in idolatry, after the exemplary judgments inflicted on their nation for that sin : and, upon their refusing to reform, denounces destruction to them, and to the kingdom wherein they sought protection.

The XLVth chapter refers to the XXXVIth chapter, and should have been placed after it. It gives an account how Baruch, having written and read Jeremiah's prophecy, the king, being displeased, sent a warrant to apprehend both of them ; but Jeremiah assures Baruch that his life should be spared to him.

In the first part of the XLVIth chapter, to the end of the 12th verse, Jeremiah foretells the overthrow of Pharaoh's army at the Euphrates, when he went against Nebuchadnezzar, in the first year of his reign. The latter part, beginning at the 13th verse, refers to their being attacked and conquered in their own country by Nebuchadnezzar, after the Jews went thither, and many years after the former conquest. The same event is foretold by Ezekiel, in his xxixth, to the end of his xxxiid chapter.

The XLVIIth chapter is a prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines.

The XLVIIIth chapter contains the judgment of Moab for several corruptions, which was executed by Nebuchadnezzar's army while engaged in the siege of Tyre, and

The XLIXth chapter contains a collection of prophecies against several of the neighbouring nations,

as the Ammonites, the Edomites, Damascus, Kedar, Elam, and others.

The Lth and LIst chapters contain a prophecy of the fall of Babylon, and the restoration of Israel and Judah, who were to survive their oppressors. This long and sublime prophecy was sent to Babylon for the encouragement of the captive Jews in that place.

The LIId chapter is historical, and was added by some other hand, probably by Ezra, after Jeremiah's time, to throw light upon his prophecies, and to illustrate the Lamentations which follow. It contains an account of Zedekiah's rebellion; of the siege and taking of Jerusalem; of Zedekiah's sons being killed, and his own eyes put out; and of the city being spoiled and burned.

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH consist of five chapters, which are so many *elegies*, or *dirges*, or *mournful poems*, on the calamities of the Jews and the Edomites. That Jeremiah was the author of them, is evident, not only from a very ancient and almost uninterrupted tradition; but, also, from the argument and style of the book, which correspond exactly with those of his prophecies. They are evidently written in *metre*, what is called *blank verse*, that is verse *without rhyme*. Bishop Lowth is of opinion, that they were originally written by the prophet, as they arose in his mind, in a long course of separate stanzas, or verses, and that they were afterwards collected into one poem. Although there is no regular arrangement of the subject in these beautiful elegies, yet they are entirely free from wildness and abruptness. Never, perhaps, was there a greater variety of beautiful, tender, and moving images, all expressive of the deepest distress and sorrow, more admirably chosen and applied, than in

these Lamentations ; nor can we too much admire the full and graceful flow of that moving eloquence, in which the author pours forth the feelings of a patriot heart, and piously weeps over the ruins of his venerable country *.

In the Ist chapter, or elegy, the prophet begins with lamenting the sad reverse which his country had experienced, confessing, at the same time, that all her miseries were the just consequences of the national wickedness and rebellion against God. In the midst of his discourse, Jerusalem herself is introduced, as a person, to continue the complaint, and humbly to implore the divine compassion. Some suppose, that, in this elegy, Jeremiah particularly deplores the carrying away of king Jehoiachin, and ten thousand of the principal Jews, to Babylon, mentioned 2 Kings xxiv. 8—17., and 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9, 10.

In the IId chapter, or elegy, Jeremiah sets forth the dreadful effects of the divine anger in the overthrow of the civil and religious constitution of the Jews, and in that extreme misery in which every description of persons was involved. He represents the wretchedness of his country as unexampled ; and charges the false prophets with having betrayed her into ruin by their false and flattering suggestions. In this forlorn and desolate condition,—the astonishment and by-word of all who see her,—Jerusalem is directed earnestly to implore the removal of those heavy judgments, which God, in the height of his displeasure, had inflicted upon her. It is supposed that this elegy was composed on the storming of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans.

* Horne, Introd. IV. 206—209. Orton, V. 644.

In the III^d chapter, or elegy, the prophet, by describing his own severe afflictions, and shewing his trust in the inexhaustible mercies of God, encourages his people to be patient and resigned under the divine chastisements, and to trust in the never-failing mercies of Jehovah. He asserts the divine supremacy in the dispensations of good and evil, and shews the unreasonableness of murmuring under them. He recommends self-examination and repentance; and, from their past experience of former deliverances from God, he encourages them to look for pardon of their sins, and punishment to their enemies.

The IVth chapter, or elegy, gives a striking contrast, in various affecting instances, between the present wretched condition of his country and her former state of prosperity; and ascribes the unhappy change chiefly to the profligacy of its priests and prophets. The national calamities are deeply and tenderly lamented, especially the captivity of their king Zedekiah. This elegy concludes with foretelling the judgments that were hanging over the Edomites, who had insulted the Jews in their distress.

The Vth chapter, or elegy, is, as it were, an epilogue, or conclusion, to the former chapters, or elegies. It is a memorial, representing, in the name of the whole body of Jews in captivity, the many calamities under which they groaned; and humbly supplicating God to have compassion on their wretchedness, and to restore them to his favour, and to their ancient prosperity.

It has been conjectured, with great probability, that, while Jeremiah mourns the present calamities and desolation of Judah and Jerusalem, yet he may

be, likewise, considered as prophetically describing the still greater miseries they were to suffer at some future time; and this seems plain, by his referring to the time,—iv. 22.,—when the punishment of their iniquity shall be accomplished, and they shall no more be held in captivity *.

The 12th verse of the 1st chapter is generally admired for its beauty and plaintiveness. The mourner, having no friend, or companion, to whom he can open his grief, is forced to implore the pity of strangers and passengers. It intimates, that *no words* were necessary to raise compassion, it was sufficient to *look* on his case, to see that his sorrow was unequalled: it intimates, also, that he had met with little compassion from some that had passed by, and that, therefore, he expostulated with others: “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.”

These words have been applied to Him whose sorrows were undoubtedly beyond those of any other. They are not so applied by any of the sacred writers, but are applied in what is called the way of *accommodation* †; and, indeed, they are so like some of the passages in the Psalms, and in the prophet Isaiah, which, undoubtedly, belong to the suffering Messiah, that, if not *intended* of Him, they are yet *applicable* to Him. We all, when suffering, are apt to think our own sufferings the greatest, because we hear and feel what *they* are, and do not feel those of others.

* Horne, IV. 207.

† See the Oratorio of the Messiah, Part II., and Newton's series of sermons entitled The Messiah, being written on the texts selected for that Oratorio.

But in HIM were *concentred*, as it were, all agonies of body and of mind. HE suffered the horrible death of crucifixion, he suffered for the sins of mankind, and, we may say, in that moment, felt the malignity of all sin from the first transgression to the consummation of all things. Well might it be said, then, “Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.” And to what *end* was this endured? To bring *us* to *joy*. To release *us* from our *sins*, and bring *us*, in the righteousness of Christ, to heaven. Amen! Amen!!

SERMON XXXIX.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—EZEKIEL I—XIII.

EZEKIEL — HIS VISION — ORDINATION — CHARGE — PROPHETIC EMBLEMS — IDOLATRIES — THE SIGN OF GOD IN THE FOREHEAD — DEPARTURE OF GOD'S GLORY — FALSE PROPHETS WARNED — MINISTERS OF GOD.

EZEKIEL II. 7.

Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

EZEKIEL, whose name signifies *the strength of God*, informs us himself, I. 3., that he was a priest, the son of Buzi, of the family of Aaron. He was one of those Jews who were carried captive to Babylon along with Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, king of Judah ; and, for that reason, he dates his prophecies by the years of that king's captivity. He is so punctual in dating them, that there is little or no difficulty as to the order of the prophecies in his writings. He began to deliver his prophecies about eight or ten years after Daniel, in the 5th year of Jehoiachin's captivity, and in the 30th year of his own age. He prophesied about 21 years. The beginning of this time falls on the year before Christ 595, and 34 years after Jeremiah had begun his office ; so that the last eight years of Jeremiah are the same with the first eight of Ezekiel. He was placed, with many other of the captives, on the river Chebar, which rises in

the border of Armenia, and runs through Mesopotamia into the river Euphrates: near the meeting of these rivers, about 200 miles to the north of Babylon, it seems, the prophet resided, and here he was favoured with his visions.

The chief design of Ezekiel's prophecies is, to comfort his brethren in captivity, who deplored their having too lightly believed the promises of Jeremiah, who had exhorted them speedily to submit to the Chaldæans, on account of the approaching ruin of Jerusalem. As these captives saw no appearance of the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecies, God raised up Ezekiel to confirm them in the faith, and to support, by new prophecies, those which Jeremiah had, long before, published, and, even then, continued to deliver in Judea. Agreeably to this design, Ezekiel foretells the dreadful calamities, which, soon after, were inflicted upon Judea and Jerusalem, on account of the idolatry, impiety and profligacy of their inhabitants; and the divine judgments that would be executed on the false prophets and prophetesses, who deluded and hardened the Jews in their rebellion against God. He, also, foretells the punishments that awaited the Ammonites, Edomites and Philistines, for their hatred of the Jews, and insulting them in their distress; the destruction of Tyre; the conquest of Egypt; the future restoration of Israel and Judah from their several dispersions, and their finally-happy state after the coming, and under the government, of the Messiah.

The prophecies of Ezekiel are divided, in our Bibles, into XLVIII chapters; and which may, properly, be divided again, or classed, into *four* parts.

The *first* part, to the end of the 21st verse of the IIIrd chapter, gives an account of a glorious appear-

ance of God to the prophet, his call to his office, with instructions and encouragements in the discharge of it.

The *second* part, from the 22d verse of the III^d chapter, to the end of the XXIVth chapter, displays the sins and punishments of the Jews, especially of those left in Judea, by several apt visions and similitudes.

The *third* part, to the end of the XXXII^d chapter, the prophet foretells the destruction of several neighbouring nations, who were enemies to the Jews.

The *fourth* part, the XXXIII^d chapter, to the end, he censures the sins, murmurings, and hypocrisy of the Jewish captives in Babylon; with which, however, he intersperses promises of their approaching deliverance under Cyrus, together with intimations of a still more glorious redemption, in future times, under the Messiah. The last nine chapters contain a remarkable vision of a new temple, and a new government for Israel and for strangers, to be applied, in the first instance, to the return from the captivity in Babylon, but, in its full, and last, sense, to the prosperity and glory of the universal Church of Christ in future times.

The style, or manner, of Ezekiel, is, generally, very bold and majestic. It is a peculiar kind of the sublime, or lofty, to which some have given the name of *the terrible*. From the nature of his visions, however, more than from his language, he is often difficult to be understood, especially towards the beginning and end of his book. The freedom with which he reproved his countrymen for their idolatry, is said to have cost him his life; the fate of many of the prophets.

The first lessons for this Sunday are the II^d and

the XIIIth chapters, so that I shall explain, now, to the end of this latter chapter.

The Ist chapter contains an account of the glorious appearance of God to Ezekiel, to give him a commission to execute the office of a prophet among the captives in Babylon, and to fill his mind with an holy awe of God. It is not easy to comprehend this vision ; and, perhaps, some general and indistinct ideas are all that we can, and all that we are intended to acquire, since Ezekiel himself could not steadily behold it for its dazzling and terrible brightness.

The first thing which Ezekiel saw, or heard, was “ a whirlwind out of the north,” a token, perhaps, of the destruction which was to come upon Jerusalem from the Chaldeans, who lived to the *north* of it, for Jerusalem and the temple were yet standing when this vision was exhibited to Ezekiel.

There was, then, “ a great cloud,” and “ a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it.” This was, probably, the *Shekinah*, or emblem of the divine presence ; like that which appeared on mount Sinai, which travelled with the Israelites in the wilderness, and which dwelt in the tabernacle and the temple, and which appeared, also, to Elijah at mount Horeb. “ And out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures.” These were, in the general appearance, like a man, or angel ; but each one had four faces, one like that of a man, another like that of a lion, another like that of an ox, and the fourth like that of an eagle. It is to be observed, that the figures on the standards of the four divisions into which the children of Israel were divided, in their camp, in the wilderness, were a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle ; so that these figures had some reference to those, likewise. These living creatures were

cherubims, and they had each four wings, and hands; and their general appearance was like fire, bright and dazzling, and quick in its flashings and motions. There was, besides, the appearance of immense wheels, or spheres, or globes, and these full of eyes, and there was life, or spirit, as it were, in these wheels. And over the heads of these cherubims was "a firmament," and on that "a throne," and on this "the appearance of a man," probably the God-man, the angel of the covenant, the Messiah, Jesus Christ. His appearance, too, was brightness and fire,—too dazzling, too dreadful,—were it not, that "the appearance of the brightness round about" was chastened in mercy, and was "as the appearance of *the bow* that is in the cloud in the day of *rain*," the token of the covenant between God and all flesh, and the token which will be on the head of the Messiah-Judge, at the last tremendous judgment. (Rev. iv. 3. x. 1.) The prophet says, "This was the *appearance* of the *likeness* of the glory of the Lord:" it was only the *appearance* of the *likeness* of God's glory; which is added, no doubt, to prevent our entertaining unworthy notions of it, as if there were in reality any such shapes and form. "And, when I saw it," says the prophet, "I fell upon my face," quite overcome with the splendour; "and I heard a voice of one that spake."

The II^d chapter, the first lesson at this morning's service, tells us what the voice uttered, "And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet," put thyself in a posture of attention, "and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me." God then reminds him how stubborn and rebellious are the people to

whom he sends him, and says—verse 6.—“And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.”

What consolation is, here, to ministers, in all times, and in all situations. How many, now, live among briers, and thorns, and scorpions! But the word of God is, “Be not afraid.” I was conversing, lately, with a minister, who said, that, for thirty years, amongst a stubborn and rebellious people, *this verse*, with GOD’S BLESSING, had been his great support.

God’s charge to all his ministers is, “Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear;” and their confidence is “Be not afraid!”

God continues, “Open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee,” that is, receive my instructions, commit them to memory, meditate upon, and digest them. “And, when I looked, behold a hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; and he spread it before me; and it was written within and without;” a parchment roll, written on both sides; “and there was written therein, lamentations, and mourning, and woe;” terrible judgments on the people for their sins, and no mercy to the Jews of that generation.

The IIId chapter is a continuation of the address of God to Ezekiel, and should not have been separated from the second: “Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go, speak unto the house of Israel.”—“Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.” It was a pleasure to be called and employed as a prophet of God, to

converse with him, and see the visions of The Most High; though the word was bitter, considering the opposition it met with, and the sad consequences of their despising the message. God having given him his commission, the vision returns; and, at the 15th verse, Ezekiel departs to his countrymen at Tel-abib, higher up on the river Chebar, where, observing their pride and corruption, after seven days, the word of the Lord came to him again, and began with setting before him the importance and awful responsibility of his office.

What I have called the second part of this book, begins at the 22d verse of this chapter, when the glory of the Lord appeared to Ezekiel, as before; and, at the beginning of

The IVth chapter, he is ordered to take a tile, or *slate*, and *draw* upon it a *picture* of Jerusalem besieged, and he is ordered to lie upon his *left* side some part of each of 390 *days*, as an emblem of the years that God would bear with them; there being just 390 *years* from Jeroboam's setting up the calves in Bethel and Dan, to the departure of the remnant of the ten tribes in the captivity of Zedekiah. And, as their sins and provocations continued so many *years*, so it seems that the last siege of Jerusalem continued about so many days. After this he was to lie upon his *right* side for some part of each of 40 days, being an emblem to Judah of 40 years, or the time from when the covenant between God and Judah was renewed, in the days of Josiah, (which was a great aggravation of their sins,) to their destruction by the Chaldeans; that is, 390 *years* for the whole house of Israel, the twelve tribes, and 40 more for the house of Judah.

From the 9th, to the end of the 17th verse, by the

scanty supply of loathsome food allowed to the prophet during his pictured siege, is represented the horrible severity of the famine endured by the Jews while Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar.

The priests among the Jews were not allowed to cut off their hair, or to shave their beards. Ezekiel, however, in the Vth chapter, is ordered to cut off his hair and his beard, and to weigh it, and to burn a third part of it, and cut a third part of it with a knife, or sword, and to disperse a third part, reserving a small remnant, which, however, after a time, are, likewise, burnt. This was another and striking emblem of the approaching sufferings of the Jews; the head signified Jerusalem, the hair, the multitude of its inhabitants, the razor, the king of Babylon, and the balances, the exactness of God's judgments.

In the VIth chapter, Ezekiel denounces the judgments of God against the Jews for their idolatry; but promises, that a remnant shall be saved, and shall be brought to a sense of their sins by their afflictions.

In the VIIth chapter, the prophet foretels the desolation of Judah, and the great distress of the small remnant that should escape. At the 23d verse, he is directed to make a chain, as a type of the captivity, in which both king and people should be led in bonds to Babylon.

The VIIIth, to the end of the XIth chapter, contains Ezekiel's vision of jealousy, and the chambers of imagery, and the departure of the glory of the Lord from the temple. The scene is at Jerusalem, and the time was fourteen months after the first vision. The design is, to shew, that the city should not escape, as the captives hoped, and what abomi-

nations were done there in the midst of their afflictions.

The prophet says, that he beheld the same bright and dazzling personage, whom he had seen in his first vision, and that this personage, in vision, took him up, by the hair of his head, and carried him to Jerusalem, where he is shewn the idolatries committed by the Jewish elders and people in the temple; particularly the image of Baal, called *the image of Jealousy*, from the provocation which it gave to God; also the Egyptian, the Phenician, and the Persian idolatries.

In the IXth chapter the prophet says that "*He*," that is the glorious person on the throne, cried in his ears "with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have a charge *over*," or, rather, *against*, "the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth towards the north," that is from Babylon; and these six persons were, probably, to represent the Chaldean army, as composed of six nations, for we read of six princes, or commanders, of it. "And one man," or angel, "among them was clothed with linen," like a priest, "with a writer's ink-horn by his side, and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar," because the Jews were to be slain as so many sacrifices to divine justice, and to avenge the pollution of the altar. "And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up, from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house," or temple, as departing from it, and to meet the messengers of vengeance, and give them their commission. "And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side, and the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem,

and set *a mark upon the foreheads* of the men that sigh, and that cry for the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.”

In a former discourse,—that on the fifth Sunday in Lent,—in considering the IVth chapter of Exodus,—I took occasion, from the case of Moses and Zipporah, and God’s anger with them for deferring the circumcision of their child, to give a warning to *Christian* parents, that they should not delay the *baptism* of their children; and I noticed an objection made by some of our dissenting brethren against our use of *the sign of the cross in baptism*, saying, that it is *setting the devil’s mark upon the forehead of the child*. I, then, urged, in defence of this practice of the Church, two instances, in the book of Revelation, (vii. 3, &c., xiv. 1,) where “the sons of *God*” have a mark, or seal, and name, set upon their foreheads, and, also, this, in Ezekiel, where the angel representing a priest, is ordered by God, to “set a mark upon the foreheads” of those who are to be saved. There appears, therefore, to be no harm, in making use of a *mark* in admitting those into the Church of Christ whom we *hope* will be saved in it, and who, we are assured, *will* be saved in it, if they really and truly believe in Christ, and evidence their faith by the holiness of their lives. And, as it is not said, either by Ezekiel, or St. John, *what* the mark, or seal, was, surely no *mark* can be so proper, as that of *the cross*, which is the emblem of *Christ crucified*, the faith and the hope of every true Christian. *The cross* has been adopted on the crown of kings, as the best and dearest emblem. It has been adopted, too, by general consent, by persons of all descriptions, in *signing their names* to any deed, as an appeal to Christ and the Father, of the truth and purity of that

to which they sign; and I never heard any one accused, in making his *cross mark*, of signing it with *the sign of the devil*.

What is described in the Xth chapter is designed to represent to the prophet, and, by him, to the people, two great calamities that were to come upon them, the burning of Jerusalem, and the departure of God's glory from the temple. The vision is repeated, here, which he saw at first, of the glory of God, his attendant angels, and the administration of his providence.

It is continued in the XIth chapter, in which severe denunciations are pronounced against those wicked princes and people who remained in Jerusalem, and made a mock at the types and predictions of the prophets. The return of the Jews is then foretold, and Jehovah's forsaking the city is represented by the glory departing, which it does by coming, first, out of the most holy place, into the holy,—then to the threshold,—then to the court,—then to the gate of the house,—and then to the mount of Olives,—from which it disappeared, to be seen no more.

In the XIIth chapter, under the types of Ezekiel's removing himself and his household goods, and eating and drinking “with quaking and with carefulness,” is foretold the captivity of Zedekiah and of the Jews still remaining at Jerusalem; and speedy judgment is pronounced against the Jews for their abuse of the divine forbearance.

The XIIIth chapter contains solemn warnings and threatenings against the false prophets and prophetesses, or the women who pretended to prophecy, and who deceived the people to their ruin. The passage from the 18th, to the end of the 21st verse,

is not, perhaps, very intelligible, “Woe to the women that sew pillows to all arm-holes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls. Will ye hunt the souls of my people? and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you? Will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley, and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies? Wherefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly. Your kerchiefs, also, will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.” On this passage it has been suggested, that, “whereas the true prophets used a coarse dress to denote the hardships which were approaching with the captivity, these prophetesses made kerchiefs or neat head-tires for all sizes and statures of their own sex, to intimate that they were not afraid of any hardships: whereas the true prophets put yokes upon their necks, as a proper emblem of the bondage of their captivity, these women sewed soft pillows under the arms of their female domestics and scholars, signifying thereby that they expected times of rest and peace*.” This explanation seems to throw much light upon it.

An expositor, however, learned in the eastern languages, by comparing the words here used with some of the same kind in the Arabic tongue, gives a better translation of this passage, free from the

* Reading's Sermons, Vol. III. p. 377.

mixture of metaphors, or figures, which there is in our translation, and renders it, "Woe to the women that weave nets to catch all legs, (or paws of beasts,) and make nets (of a smaller kind) for the head of every (bird) rising up to fly;" in allusion to two sorts of nets, the one, stronger, with which they took wild beasts, the other, smaller, with which they caught birds. And the 20th verse, he translates, thus, "Behold I am against your nets, with which ye hunt souls, and will tear them from your arms on which ye carry them; and your smaller nets will I tear." This makes a beautiful connected sense, and admirably suits the connection; while they were prophesying peace to the people, they were only hunting them down, and destroying their lives*.

You see, then, my brethren, the exceeding sinfulness, the loathsomeness, and the misery of sin, both here and hereafter; and you see how *we*, the ministers of God, are called upon to shew you these things, to warn you to forsake and avoid them, and to exhort you to repentance and amendment of life, and *that* at the peril of our own souls, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, and whatever may be the consequence, whatever usage we may meet at your hands. A minister, then, is bound to exhort you in public and in private, generally and particularly. And think him not your *enemy* in so doing; he is, depend upon it, your truest, your best *friend*. If you were walking, blindfold, to a precipice, and, on falling over and coming to the bottom, must be inevitably shattered to death, and one were to lay hold of you, and save you, what should you think of *him*? If your house were on fire, and you

* Costard: see Orton, Vol. VI. p. 53.

were asleep in it, and one were to awaken you, and hurry you away from the flames, what should you think of *him*? If you were drowning in the water, and, as you were sinking for the last time, one were to venture in, and save you, what should you think of *him*?

Undoubtedly you would think him your *friend*, your BEST FRIEND. Such a one is your minister. You are about to *perish*—to PERISH EVERLASTINGLY—and he would save you, by rescuing you from sin and Satan, and bringing you to CHRIST: with Him—and with Him alone—is plenteous redemption. CHRIST! CHRIST!!

SERMON XL.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—EZEKIEL XIV—XVIII.

IDOLS SET UP IN THE HEART—THE TRINITY—THE FOUR SORE JUDGMENTS OF GOD—THE ADULTERY OF JERUSALEM—THE EAGLES, THE CEDAR, AND THE VINE—THE BRANCH OF THE CEDAR—GOD'S DEALINGS WITH THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED—THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN.

EZEKIEL XVIII. 27.

When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

IN my last discourse, I considered the book of the prophet Ezekiel, as far as to the end of the XIIIth chapter. The first lessons for this day are the XIVth and the XVIIIth. I have, therefore, now, to consider those two and the chapters between, being five chapters in all.

The XIVth chapter exposes the hypocrisy of those, who pretend to be worshippers of God, while they are idolaters, and shews what calamities should come upon Judea. The prophet says, “Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.” Who these *elders* were is uncertain, probably some persons of note, who came from Jerusalem to the king of Babylon, or on some other business in that country. These came to attend on Ezekiel with an ill design, particularly, to see if they could

discern any contradiction between his prophecies and Jeremiah's, in order to weaken the authority of both. The prophet continues, "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart," though they pretend to have renounced them, "and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face," set up idols as objects of worship, which is their sin, and will be their ruin: "should I be inquired of at all by them?" should I give such hypocrites a favourable answer?

We protestants, it is true, do not make idols of wood and stone, and bow down to them. But, are we not *as idolatrous*, or *almost so*, as the Jews were? Do we not "set up *idols* in our *hearts*?" Do we not give up our hearts to other things, to the world, the flesh, and the devil, when we should give them up to God? Whatever a man prefers to God, whether it be his belly, (Phil. iii. 19.) that is eating and drinking, or covetousness, (Col. iii. 5.) that is making money by unlawful means, or to an undue extent, *that* is his *god*, his idol, and he is as much an idolater, as the Jews were in the time of Ezekiel.

God says, that, if such an one comes to inquire of the prophet, that he (God) will answer him. And it is said, at the 9th verse, "And, if the prophet be deceived, when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet," or, it might be rendered, Have I the Lord deceived that prophet? Is it to be charged upon me? or, rather, I have permitted him to be deceived, as a punishment for his idolatries and pretences to inspiration. God is said to *deceive* the false prophet, as he is said to have *hardened the heart* of Pharaoh, that is, what he did had that *effect*, through his own perverse disposition, when it ought

to have had a directly contrary effect, to have softened, to have humbled it. It is evident, that the person speaking to Ezekiel, in this chapter, called, at the 2d verse, “the Word of the Lord,” is the same as “the likeness as the appearance of a man,” whom he saw upon the throne, as mentioned I. 26.; and he is called, in this XIVth chapter, the 11th verse, by the same word in the Hebrew, as is translated, Exodus iii. 14., I AM. So that, by the words “that they may be my people, and I may be their God, said the Lord God,” we are to understand that Christ, here, as the Word, and Messenger of the Covenant, promises, that, to the posterity of these Jews God would be (that is, would be revealed to be)—not “their God,” as we render it, but more expressively—should be “to them, for *Elohim*,” that is, should be revealed to them as a *Trinity*, or *Three Persons in one Godhead**.

At the 12th verse, God begins to say, that he will bring his four sore judgments upon the land for their sins, famine, noisome beasts, the sword, and the pestilence. Alas! that any one should ever offend a God who has such means of vengeance in his power, a *good* God, who does not send them when we *deserve* them, no nor when we *greatly* deserve them, but only when sin is exceedingly provoking, and cries aloud for punishment! Famine, noisome beasts, the sword, and pestilence! What a favoured country is *this*! What a favoured people have *we* been! Not that *we* have *not* sinned; but that God has been most indulgent to us. We have, indeed, in some years, suffered from *scarcity*. But what is *scarcity*,—which sets us only upon economy, and manage-

* See Wogan, Vol. IV. p. 271, 259, 318.

ment, and abstemiousness ;—compared with *famine*, which, as in the siege of Samaria, reduces men to a scanty portion of damaged beans, or tares, to eat the head of an ass, and even human flesh,—the flesh of their own children ?

How few are the kinds of *noisome animals* known in *this* country ; and, of those kinds, how few the numbers, and those how easily kept under ?

And, as to the *sword*, it is, now, eighty years * since it was unsheathed in this country to the abiders at home ; for, though we were engaged in war, with but a short interval, for two and twenty years, with a formidable foe ; yet no hostile sword was suffered to strike in this island.

The *pestilence*, commonly so called, which once “walked,” not only “in darkness,” but, also, “at noon day,” (Psalm xci. 6,) has not been known among us of an hundred and sixty years ; and God has graciously vouchsafed us the *means of staying* that more restricted pestilence the *small-pox*, where men have the pious gratitude to receive it.

God says, at the 14th verse of this chapter, that when he is provoked to bring his judgments upon the land, “though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness.” When Abraham interceded for Sodom, God would have spared all the city, had there been but ten righteous in it. And, when Sodom was absolutely doomed to destruction, Lot had liberty to rescue his sons-in-law along with his daughters ; but, here, the iniquity was so great, that had Noah, Daniel and Job been there, God would only have granted them their own souls. But what

* Since the Rebellion in the year 1745.

an encouragement is this to those who do maintain their integrity amidst a rebellious generation, that the eye of God is upon them, and he will deliver them, he will deliver them by some such means as he did Noah from the flood, Daniel from the lion's jaws, and Job from the captivity of poverty, disease and misery.

The 22d and 23d verses assure the Jews, that, notwithstanding this, still a remnant shall be left, that he has acted with perfect justice and a gracious design, and has yet mercies in store for them.

The XVth chapter, represents how worthless Jerusalem was become in the sight of God. The Jewish church is often compared to a vine, on account of its luxuriant growth and excellent fruit; but, having quite lost all goodness and usefulness, it was fit for nothing but to be destroyed.

The portion of the book in our XVIth chapter is designed to convince the Jews of their great and shameful ingratitude to God, especially in their gross idolatry, under the emblem of a person taking care of an helpless exposed infant, bringing her up, marrying her, and supporting her with the greatest elegance and affection, but who, after all, proved unchaste and abandoned. The whole, though expressed in language plainer than is used, now, in polished society, is, nevertheless, represented in a most beautiful and affecting light, and was, probably, sent by letter to Jerusalem.

In the XVIIth chapter, under what is called a riddle, and a parable, of two eagles, and a cedar, and a vine, is shewed God's judgment upon Jerusalem, for revolting from Babylon to Egypt. "A great eagle, with great wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colours,"—that is Nebu-

chadnezzar, who was a warlike prince, had a great extent of dominion, and many nations confederate with him,—“came to Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar,” that is the kingdom of Judah : “He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants;” he took away Jeconiah the king, who was but eighteen years old, and carried him to Babylon, a place of great commerce. “He took, also, of the seed of the land,” Zedekiah, his uncle, a native and of the royal seed, “and planted it in a fruitful field,” in the land of Judea, and “it became a vine.” “There was, also, verse 7, another great eagle, with great wings and many feathers,” which was the king of Egypt, to whom this vine turned its roots, forsaking and rebelling against the first eagle which had planted it, for which its fruit was to be cut off, and it was to wither away, and to have its roots pulled up.

At the 11th verse, an explanation is given of the parable, and, at the 22d verse, begins a remarkable prophecy, which some understand of the restoration of the house of David under Zerubbabel; but it, rather, refers to Christ, the highest from the stock of David, when the family was reduced very low.

“Thus saith the Lord God; I will, also, take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it. I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon a high mountain and eminent;” that is, at Jerusalem, the high and holy mountain, where the gospel was first published. “In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches

thereof shall they dwell;" it shall become a great and flourishing kingdom, and gather many of all nations under it. "And all the trees of the field," all the nations, "shall know, that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish;" that is, I have been carrying on my great designs; have brought down those kingdoms which seemed most strong and lasting; and have exalted the kingdom of my son: "I the Lord have spoken, and have done it;" it shall as surely be accomplished, as if it were already done.

The XVIIIth chapter, the first lesson at this evening's service, is one in which we are all highly concerned, as the Judge of all the earth gives us an account of his dealing with all his creatures; at the same time instructing the Jews, that they should find it better, or worse, with them, as they behaved themselves in their captivity.

The Jews, at this time, had got a proverb, which was very common in their mouths, that "The fathers had eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth were set on edge." Meaning that they were suffering for the sins of their fathers, when they themselves were innocent. But, "As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel," there shall be such a visible difference between the righteous and the wicked. "Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so, also, the soul of the son is mine;" they are equally my work, and, therefore, I will deal impartially by them: "the soul that sinneth it shall die;" he shall suffer for his own fault here, and be miserable hereafter.

He, then, proceeds to state *five* different cases of

penitent and impenitent sinners, with the true grounds and motives upon which he acquitteth the one, and condemneth the other.

The *first* case, from the 5th, to the end of the 9th verse, is that of a *just* man ; one, who, from faith in God, is righteous in all points, who has preserved his integrity to the utmost of his power, and constantly led a moral and religious life. Such person (without respect to any worldly relations of father and son, and so on, and with gracious allowances for the infirmities of our present frail nature, and in consideration of the atonement to be made by the Christ,) shall have a favourable sentence pronounced when he comes to appear before the just judgment-seat of God ; and will be adjudged to *live*.

The *second* case, the 10th, to the end of the 13th verse, is that of *the son of a righteous father degenerating into wickedness*, and dying in his sin ; such a one shall have no favour, or benefit, from the piety of his father, or forefathers ; but, for his own iniquities, and the sins he hath committed, he shall be condemned to *die*.

The *third* case, the 14th, to the end of the 17th verse, is that of *a righteous son of a wicked father*. If he practise, and persevere in virtue, and the duties of religion ; such a one shall not suffer for the iniquity of his parents : “ He shall surely *live*.”

The 18th verse contains the sentence upon the iniquitous father.

At the 19th verse, the objection of the factious Jews is stated, “ Yet say ye, Why ? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father ? ” They appeal to their own experience for the contrary. God replies, “ When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done

them; he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon *him*, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon *him*."

There are some passages in Scripture that seem to contradict this; as, when God is said to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children: the meaning of which is, that God would bring such national calamities upon the Israelites, for their idolatry, as would affect succeeding generations, such as war and captivity. But, here, he seems to be speaking of the manner in which he will finally deal with *souls*.

But, even these temporal and national calamities might be averted by repentance, as when God suspended the judgments pronounced upon Ahab on account of his repentance, saying he would bring the judgments in his sons' days. (1 Kings xxi. 29.) And would he not much more have deferred, or altogether have withdrawn, them on the repentance of the sons?

The *fourth* case, the 21st, to the end of the 23d verse, is that of a person, who hath been a great sinner, even the greatest of sinners, but repents of his wickedness, and leads the remainder of his life in a strict observance of God's laws, doing that which is lawful and right; such a man shall receive a full and absolute pardon:—"He shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall *live*."

There are some penitents, who have committed great and scandalous sins, who are under the appre-

hension of having those secret and shocking crimes laid open before men and angels at the last day. But, here, we are assured, that this will not be the case, if those sins be forsaken and repented of. An act of oblivion is, here, promised, which shall bury them in eternal silence; or, as God, elsewhere, declares, (Isaiah xliv. 22.) “I will blot out thy sins as a thick cloud.” No trace, or sign, of them shall remain, when mercy has once dispersed the dark cloud of guilt, which interposed between God and the soul. And, farther, to assure us of this abundant forgiveness, God asserts the infinite goodness and mercy of his nature, as an evident proof to every true penitent, that it cannot be otherwise, in this strong and affecting question,—“Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways, and live?” Thus the true penitent hath no *reproach* to fear after his death; much less, as the Papists feign, a *purgatory*, or purifying in the fire.

The *fifth*, and last, case, as stated in the 24th verse, is that of a *righteous man turning from his righteousness*, and falling back into sin. His former piety and good works shall be of no avail; “in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he *die* *.”

The Jew is, then, again represented as murmuring, and saying, “The way of the Lord is not equal.” But God asserts his own justice, “Hear, now, O house of Israel, Is not my way equal?” reflect upon what I have been saying, and then judge: “Are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth ini-

* See Wogan, Vol. IV. p. 272, &c.

quity, and dieth in them ; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he *die*. Again,"—Then followeth—the 27th verse—the verse which I have chosen for my text, and which standeth the first of those sentences, with some of which we begin the Morning and Evening Service ;—" When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive."

This passage is considered by those who hold the doctrine of justification by works, without a necessity of faith in Christ, and other points, as decidedly in their favour ; but it must be remembered that it is addressed to Jews, and implies their forsaking their sins and doing their works in a right faith ; as, for instance, would a Jew have been accepted who did not believe in the fall of Adam, and the consequent corruption of human nature, and who did not feel his own depravity, and the necessity of a Redeemer who was to come, and the being sanctified and supported by the Holy Spirit of God ? Besides, we are unable of ourselves even to turn away from our wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right ; but must be drawn by God, his Holy Spirit suggesting, moving, determining, strengthening, guiding, and perfecting.

Nor must we make *a Bible* of any *single text* ; that is, we must not set up *a single text* as *the whole word of God* ; but we must consider the whole of Scripture in all its bearings, and illustrate one passage by another. In this view, we shall know assuredly, that " by grace are we saved through *faith*," (Eph. ii. 8.) and that " without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. xii. 14.)

Such, then, should ever be the thoughts which

should arise in our minds whenever we hear this sentence read in Church.

It may, perhaps, be objected to this view of the subject, that, still, the doctrine of original sin, and the propagation of it from Adam to his posterity, and, so, consequently, from father to son, is a visiting of the sin of the father upon his multitudinous posterity, to hundreds of generations. Many and endless are the disputes on this subject, and various the arguments for reconciling this effect of our fall to the equity and justice of divine goodness. But they are too long, and too difficult, and too unprofitable to be discussed in this place. Let us rather resolve, with St. Augustine, to exercise our humility, in acknowledging our ignorance, than our speculations and curiosity, in explaining, or opposing, this mysterious point.

“This sin of the first man,” saith that saint, “is ineffable and incomprehensible, as well in itself, as in its consequences. It is for us, therefore, to revere, in the verity and justice of God, what is not in our power to comprehend. And it is but just, that man, having presumed, contrary to his order, to affect the knowledge of good and evil, by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, which had been forbidden him, should not be able to understand this profound mystery of iniquity, in which we are involved by our birth, and from whence we cannot possibly be delivered, but through faith in Christ, and the grace of regeneration, or the new birth in baptism *.”

On the equity and advantages of having had the first man, our great ancestor Adam, as our *covenanted head*, I spoke, at some length, in my sermon on Sexagesima Sunday, when considering the fall of man.

* Wogan, Vol. IV. p. 275.

I conclude, my brethren, with the last two verses of this XVIIIth chapter, “ Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore, turn yourselves, and live ye.”

SERMON XLI.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—EZEKIEL XIX—XLVIII.

CONTENTS OF THE BOOK—THE SABBATH HALLOWED—THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM—THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS—THE GENERAL RESURRECTION.

EZEKIEL XX. 19, 20.

I am the Lord your God ; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them ;

And hallow my sabbaths ; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.

IN my first discourse on the prophecies of Ezekiel, on the Sunday before the last, I observed that they might be divided, or classed, into *four* parts.

The *first* part, to the end of the 21st verse of the III^d chapter, gives an account of a glorious appearance of God to the prophet, his call to his office, with instructions and encouragements in the discharge of it.

The *second* part, from the 22^d verse of the III^d chapter, to the end of the XXIVth chapter, displays the sins and punishments of the Jews; especially of those left in Judea, by several apt visions and similitudes.

The *third* part, to the end of the XXXII^d chapter, the prophet foretells the destruction of several neighbouring nations, who were enemies to the Jews.

The *fourth* part, the XXXIII^d chapter, to the end,

he censures the sins, murmurings, and hypocrisy of the Jewish captives in Babylon ; with which, however, he intersperses promises of their approaching deliverance under Cyrus, together with intimations of a still-more-glorious redemption, in future times, under the Messiah. The last nine chapters contain a remarkable vision of a new temple, and a new government for Israel and strangers ; to be applied, in the first instance, to the return from the captivity in Babylon ; but, in its full, and last, sense, to the prosperity and glory of the universal Church of Christ, in future times.

The first lessons on the first Sunday, the sixteenth after Trinity, were the II^d and the XIIIth, so that my first discourse was on the first XIII chapters. The first lessons, on Sunday last, were the XIVth and the XVIIIth, so that my discourse was on those and the three chapters between. The first lessons for this day are the XXth and the XXIVth, and we have no more from the book ; so that, I must, now, begin at the XIXth, dwelling chiefly on the lessons for the day, and the chapters between, and must touch but briefly on the remainder.

The XIXth chapter contains a lamentation for two of the princes of Israel, Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, who was a tyrant, and made great desolation, and his brother Jehoiakim, who imitated the vices of his brother, without taking warning by his misfortunes, under the parable of two lions' whelps taken in a pit ; and, also, for Jerusalem, beginning at the 10th verse, under the parable of a vine consumed by fire coming out from one of its branches, which signifies the miseries brought upon the kingdom, by Zedekiah breaking his oath with the king of Babylon, and rebelling against him.

The XXth chapter, to the end of the 44th verse, is one subject, or prophecy ; and the remainder, the 45th verse, to the end, should have been joined to the XXIst chapter. The elders came to inquire of the Lord. What their particular inquiry was, is not said ; it seems to have been, Whether they might comply with some of the idolatries in Babylon, that, so, they might be upon better terms with their neighbours. But God said, “ I will not be inquired of by you ;” or, I will not give you such an answer as you expect.

He, then, proceeds to give them a history of their rebellions, and, at the 10th verse, says, “ I caused them to go forth out of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which, if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover, also, I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.” The sabbath, probably, was not observed in Egypt, as their task-masters allowed them no rest, and, therefore, the command to observe it was then renewed. “ But,” he adds, “ the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness : they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which, if a man do, he shall even live in them ; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted : then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness to consume them.”

This charge, of “ polluting” and “ profaning the sabbaths,” is frequently repeated, in this, and other chapters, (xx. 16, 21. xxii. 8 ;) and God declares how he will punish them for it ; but says, at the 19th and 20th verses, in the words which I have chosen for my text, “ I am the Lord your God ; walk in my

statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God."

The sabbath, then, was *a privilege* and *a blessing* to the Israelites, and *a sign* between them and God, that they were his people; and our blessed Lord and his Apostles have enjoined the observance of it upon *us* Christians. *We* ought, therefore, to consider it as *a privilege* and *a blessing*, likewise; and observe it as *a holy sign* between God and us. Let us consider, then, do *we*, *as a nation*, hallow the sabbath, or pollute it? And let us consider, more particularly, Do *we*, *as a parish*, hallow, or pollute, it?

As a *nation*, we have, no doubt, many excellent laws for the due observance of the sabbath generally; but they are too often violated, from the infidelity of men, and from the negligence and connivance of magistrates and other officers; and there are many breaches of it allowed by law, and committed under the sanction of government. Our first consideration should be, What is the law of God? And, when we know *that*, it is to be done, whether it be the law of the land, or not.

One of the authorized breaches of the sabbath, (as I have before had occasion to observe *) is travelling, and especially our mail-coaches. It is urged, in defence of this, that, as a *commercial* country, it cannot be dispensed with. But is not this to set up our *commerce* as an *idol*, to which we give the preference above the Great God of heaven and earth? It is putting away the blessing of God from our

* In my Three Discourses on the Case of the Animal Creation, and the Duties of Man to them, Disc. iii. p. 54, 68.

commerce. Would it be any real hindrance, or loss, to our commerce, if all travelling, all labour ceased upon the sabbath, and our drivers, and servants, and cattle, all rested upon the sabbath, agreeably to God's commandment? I have no hesitation in saying, that it would *not*, but quite the contrary, that we should have God's blessing the more abundantly upon it, and prosper the more.

Let us, next, consider, particularly, in respect to *this parish*. But I will, rather, state in what manner I would wish the sabbath to be observed, than enter very particularly upon what *is done*.

In the first place, then, the sabbath should be cleared, as much as possible, from all worldly labour and business; the necessities, and decencies of life, certainly, require some things to be done, as, in this climate, the lighting of fires and preparing convenient food; but any thing which can be done on the day before, or the day following, should be so, that the sabbath may be left free to God; and, in order to this, masters should pay their servants, so that they may have an opportunity of procuring their food and necessaries in time, and that no one should wish to go to a shop upon the sabbath. A shopkeeper should strenuously refuse to sell upon any part of the sabbath, nor should he employ any part of it in posting his books, or writing out bills, or writing letters; those things are a part of the *work* of the six days' of labour.

On the Sabbath a man has no trade, no profession. It is a day on which he has no work to do, but works of mercy to man and brute, and of piety to God.

And, if useful work should not be done upon the sabbath, neither should it be made a day of idle, much less of dissolute, visiting. To the social inter-

course of friends and neighbours there would be no objection, provided a part of the time were passed in a manner suitable to the object of the day, in religious discourse, or religious reading and devotion.

The day being thus cleared from all worldly pursuits and thoughts, let us consider how we might best employ it in honour to God. In some Discourses, which I have twice preached, explaining our *Liturgy*, or church-service, I have stated that, what we now make our morning-service, originally made *three* services. What is called the *Morning Prayer* began early, at five, or six, or seven o'clock. *The Litany* was a separate service, and began at nine, or ten; and, then, after another interval, the *Communion* and a Homily, or Sermon. This practice, undoubtedly, had its advantages. Our morning service, as we now have it, is too long, both for the minister and the people; and, the having it in *three*, besides that each service would be less tedious, it would spread the devotions over a greater part of the day. But I fear it would not be of any advantage to attempt to return now to the old practice. We are more tender than our forefathers, and less inclined to leave our warm houses, (and *that* fasting,) than they were. But, were it to appear to be the general wish of the congregation to divide our service, and have one at an earlier hour, I should, undoubtedly, be happy to meet their wishes. It might be tried, perhaps, during the summer months. Our dissenting brethren have a prayer-meeting at an earlier hour; but I do not understand that *that* is well attended. And, indeed, our morning-service, at the hour at which we now hold it, even when there is a sermon, is so thinly attended, that, at an earlier hour, when there never was any sermon, I doubt,

we should have scarcely any. This is, I fear, owing to several causes. Instead of masters paying their men in good time, and getting their families to rest, that they may arise fresh to the duties of the sabbath, the market detains the masters; some of them, if not overcome by drink, are heated by it, the men are not paid till late in the evening, or till the morning of the sabbath, and the men get to the public-house on the Saturday-night, and stay till late; and, instead of rising early and refreshed for the devotions of the sabbath, they are asleep or muddled. And, now that I have mentioned *the public-houses*, I will observe, that the being there, at any time, on the sabbath, seems to me to be quite inconsistent with the nature of the day, which requires rest, holy services, and holy joy.

We will suppose, then, a Sabbath, such as I think would be becoming Christians in a retired country parish, such as ours.

All having provided the day, or the evening, before, for the greater part of the wants of the Sabbath, and retired to rest at an early hour,—they would arise fresh in the morning, attend to the wants of their *stock* and the family, and, dressed as is becoming to appear before the Lord of heaven and earth, would attend at early prayers,—at seven, or at eight o'clock, we will say, in the summer,—when the morning prayer would occupy about an hour. We might return home till half-past ten; and then have the Litany and the Communion; and the sermon, alternately, morning and evening, as now. Your dinner time and afternoon service might continue as it is. In some places,—and, indeed, at the *Meeting* in this place,—it is customary to have *evening* prayer; but, excepting when the days are long,

and it can be by day-light, it appears to me inexpedient ; it is bringing out young people and servants into the way of temptation, in which they too often fall. I would rather recommend that each house, or that a few neighbours should join, and have an evening reading and devotion, at which all the family, and especially the servants, should be expected to attend. In summer, an evening walk, amid the beauties and the wonders of God's creation, need not interfere with, but might add to the pious thoughts and meditations of the day.

Now, I will ask, What would there be unreasonable, what would there be austere, or unpleasant, in such a day as this ? I will, farther, ask, Would not such a one be nearer to what is our duty ? and would it not, when you were accustomed to it, be a day of rest, of ease, and of delight ? Why, then, is it not done ? [Why do I look around me at Church and see so few, so very few of my parishioners ? When the last account of the number of the inhabitants was taken, it amounted to 545, the number is, probably, increased since. There are now, about 90 persons present, of which number about 36 are children, chiefly of the Sunday School. Where are the remainder ? Some are, no doubt, at the *meeting*, which is, indeed, a place of worship ; but how many are not at any place of worship, nor will be during the whole day ? How many are engaged in worldly business of some kind or another ? how many are providing the meat which perishes, instead of that which endures to everlasting life ? how many are idling away their time ? how many are committing *sin* ? Indeed all who are absent from any cause, but such as God himself will allow, are absent in sin, and

will have to answer to Him, at the dreadful day of judgment, for having “polluted his Sabbath.”]

I have dwelt, thus long, upon this subject, because it is of infinite importance. My brethren,—my beloved brethren—I beseech you to lay it to heart, and, henceforth, hallow the Sabbaths, and let them be a sign between the Lord your God and you.

The next prophecy is contained in that part, beginning at the 45th verse of the XXth chapter, to the end of the 7th verse of the XXIst chapter, in which Ezekiel, under the types of a fire consuming wood, and of a drawn sword, describes the ruin and destruction of Jerusalem. The type of the sword is repeated, in that part, beginning at the 8th verse, to the end of the 17th; and, in that, from the 18th, to the end of the chapter, he says, that the king of Babylon should consult the magicians by lot, by arrows, to know whether he should make war first against the Ammonites, or against the Jews; and that God would cause the lot to fall in such a manner, that the Jews should be destroyed first; and that Zedekiah their king, who is here called a profane and wicked prince, should receive the punishment of his perfidiousness, after which the Ammonites should be conquered and destroyed.

In the XXIIId chapter, Ezekiel prophesies against Jerusalem; he mentions the crimes that were there committed, such as idolatry, contempt of parents, injustice, oppression, murder, profanation of the divine service, adultery, bribes, corruption and extortion, and says, that these crimes would cause the total ruin of Jerusalem, and of that whole nation. But he complains, above all, that the prophets, the priests, and the magistrates abandoned themselves

to all kinds of iniquity; and that no one endeavoured to put a stop to the wrath of God, which was ready to fall upon the people.

In the XXIII^d chapter, the idolatries of Samaria and Jerusalem are represented by the lewd practices of two common harlots, who were sisters. The Lord declares, that, as Samaria, or the ten tribes, had been given into the hands of the Assyrians for their idolatry; so the men of Judah, who had been witnesses of the punishment of their brethren, and, instead of taking warning by it, had surpassed them in wickedness, should shortly be laid waste by the Chaldeans.

Archbishop Newcome says, that ‘The style of this chapter, like that of the sixteenth, is adapted to men, among whom, at that time, no refinement subsisted.’ Large allowance must be made for language addressed to an Eastern people, in the worst period of their history; all whose ideas were sensual, and whose grand inducement to idolatry seems to have been the brutal impurities which it encouraged*.

In the XXIVth chapter, the prophet, now, tells those of the captivity the very day on which Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, as you may see also, on comparing this with the 4th verse of the LI^d chapter of Jeremiah. He describes the fate of that city and its inhabitants by the similitude of a cauldron or seething-pot. The pot signifies Jerusalem, the flesh and pieces the inhabitants, and the coals and the water, the calamities they were to endure. The prophet’s wife, also, dying, he is forbidden to mourn for her; which intimates, that the

* Orton, Vol. VI. p. 97.

sufferings of the Jews should surpass all expressions of grief; and that private sorrow ought to be lost amidst public calamities.

This chapter concludes what I have called the *second* part, or section, of the prophecies of Ezekiel; and, the time getting on, I must merely repeat what I have already said as to the remainder, that

The *third* part goes on to the end of the XXXIId chapter, in which the prophet foretells the destruction of several neighbouring nations, who were enemies to the Jews. And, in

The *fourth* part, to the end, he censures the sins, murmurings, and hypocrisy of the Jewish captives in Babylon; with which, however, he intersperses promises of their approaching deliverance under Cyrus, together with intimations of a still-more-glorious redemption, in future times, under the Messiah.

There is one passage, however, in the XXXVIIth chapter, which I am unwilling altogether to pass over, as it relates to two circumstances of the greatest interest and importance, the *final restoration of the Jews*, and the *general resurrection*; it is the vision of the dry bones, from the 1st, to the end of the 14th verse. The prophet says, “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord,” that is, in a vision, or trance, “and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry;” as if some great battle had been fought there, and the carcasses had been left unburied, a prey to the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and the bones, having been stripped and broken, were left to dry and whiten in the air and the sun: and these bones

were an emblem of the Jews, who seemed to be in as hopeless a condition, as unlikely to be recovered. “And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest;” if thou art pleased to command them, they may. “Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and I will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with a skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and, as I prophesied, there was a noise, and, behold, a shaking,” or rattling noise, like that of bones rushing together, “and the bones came together, bone to his bone;” that is, every bone came to its proper body, and proper place in the body to which it belonged; for bones are so curiously constructed and fitted, that those of one body will not suit another. “And, when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind,” or breath, “Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live;” or, breathe the vital principle that unites soul and body. “So I prophesied, as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army;” in a posture of defence and ready for service. The Lord, then, proceeds to shew the meaning of this vision, “Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones

are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know, that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you," a spirit of repentance, piety and zeal, "and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord."

As far as relates to the restoration of the Jews, I will merely say, farther, at this time, that, from this, and other, passages of Scripture, we believe, that, before the consummation of all things, we look to see "the whole house of Israel," collected, and revived, and returned to their own land,—not, probably, *as Jews*, but as *Christians*, under the Messiah, the hope, the joy, and the glory of them and of all nations.

But this passage, likewise, together with other passages of the Old, and the whole tenor of the New Testament, assures us of a restoration to life of all those bodies which shall have, once, been dead. In the cemetery which surrounds the place in which we are now assembled, we deposit the lifeless bodies of those who have once been living amongst us: there are parents and children, husbands and wives, brethren and sisters, friends, and every connection that was once dear.—There they moulder into *dust*.—But, *Is the churchyard the end of every thing?*—Cannot this *dust* LIVE? Most assuredly it will. The Word of the Lord hath promised it. The particles of dust will perhaps move together, and form bones,

and there will be “a noise and a shaking,” and they will “come together,” dust to his dust, and “bone to his bone,” and the sinews and the flesh will “come up upon them,” and there will be breath, and the soul will be again united to the body. It is as easy to God to re-form, and to *revive* the dust, as it was at first to form man out of the dust. It is as easy to Him to say, Let there be a general resurrection, let the earth and the sea give up their dead,—as it was, at first, to say, Let there be light: and there was light.—Let the earth bring forth—Let the waters bring forth: and they brought forth. The patriarch Job was assured of this, he said, “I *know* that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand, at the latter day, upon the earth; And, though, after my skin, worms destroy this body; yet, in my flesh, shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.” (xix. 25—27.) Our Lord himself said (John v. 28, 29.) “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,”—the voice of the Son of Man,—“And shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.”

St. Paul tells us—in the XVth chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians—a part of which is always read at our burials—that, at “the resurrection of the dead,”—“the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” But, then, the question returns, Will it be to the resurrection of *life*, or of *damnation*?

Our Lord said to Martha, “I am *the resurrection* and *the life*: he that believeth in *me*, though he were

dead, yet shall he live; And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die," (John xi. 26.) never suffer eternal death, or damnation.

Give us, then, blessed Lord Jesus, *Faith in Thee*, and, then, we shall *never die*; but *live*, with Thee and the Father and the Holy Spirit, *for ever, world without end. Amen.*

SERMON XLII.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—DANIEL I—XII.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL—SIEGE OF JERUSALEM—THE THREE HEBREW YOUTHS—NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM—THE THREE YOUTHS IN THE FURNACE—NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S INSANITY—BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST—DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN—DANIEL'S VISIONS—THE SEVENTY WEEKS.

DANIEL iii. 28.

Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his Angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God.

AND vi. 23.

Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

THE whole book of Daniel is that portion of Scripture which we are this day to consider.

Daniel, the fourth of the greater prophets, was, probably, of the royal family of the kings of Judah, and was every way eminent as a learned man, a statesman, a saint, and a prophet. He was carried captive to Babylon at about the age of 20, or little more, in the year 606 before Christ. After he had been at Babylon about 2 years, he began to prophesy, and continued to do so throughout the captivity and for a short time after. His last vision was

in the 3d year of Cyrus. It does not appear that he ever returned to the land of Israel ; but he, probably, died at Susa on the river Tigris, when about 94 years old. He began his prophetic office upwards of 20 years before Jeremiah had finished, and 13 years before Ezekiel had begun, and continued for many years after them both, in all about 72 years.

Though a captive, he lived in great regard with Nebuchadnezzar, the king, who promoted him to a station of the greatest honour and trust ; and his extraordinary merit procured him the like regard from Darius and Cyrus, when he conquered Babylon.

The Jews, since the time of Jesus Christ, will not allow him to be a prophet ; and, in their Bible, his book is not put among the prophets, because, they say, he did not live a mortified life, and prophesied in a strange land. But Josephus accounts Daniel one of the greatest of the prophets ; and says, that he conversed familiarly with God ; and, not only foretold future events, (as other prophets did) but, also, determined the time in which they should happen *. Our Lord, Matt. xxiv. 15., Mark xiii. 14., calls him “ a prophet,” and the angel Gabriel, Dan. ix. 23., x. 11, 19., “ a man greatly beloved.”

The true reason why the Jews deny Daniel to be a prophet, is, because he so clearly foretold the *sufferings* of the Messiah, and the *time* when they should happen. One of their celebrated rabbies, who lived about 50 years before Christ, declared, “ that the time fixed by Daniel for the coming of the Messiah, could not exceed 50 years from that time.” It plainly appears, that, at the time of Christ’s coming, the

* Antiquities, book x. ch. 11. § 7.

whole Jewish nation expected the Messiah, and thought the kingdom of God was immediately to appear; and their expectation was principally grounded on this prophecy. There were many false Christs about that time and since, but none before. During the whole siege of Jerusalem, by the Romans, after the time of our Lord, they hoped for deliverance, upon the authority of this prophecy; misapprehending that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince: and Josephus thought the Roman emperor Vespasian was the Messiah, at least he complimented him with the title. But, now, the Jews are got quite beyond their reckoning, and are puzzled to account for it, why the Messiah does not appear. Some of them allow, that Daniel's *seventy weeks* closed before the destruction of Jerusalem, but that the Messiah's coming was deferred, by reason of the sins of the nation: but this is a poor *come off*. We are told, that, in the seventeenth century, there was a public dispute at Venice, between a Jew and a convert from Judaism to Christianity, concerning the sense of this prophecy. A noted rabbi was chosen moderator, and a great many Jews were present. The Christian urged his arguments against the Jews with so much force, that, at length, the rabbi said, "Let us shut up our books, for, if we go on examining this prophecy any farther, we shall all become Christians. It cannot be denied," added he, "that the time of the Messiah's coming is already past; but, whether Jesus of Nazareth be the person, I cannot determine." The consequence of this was, that several Jews were converted; and one of them, a very learned man, who wrote a large book against the Jews, in the preface to which he tells this story, as having been the means of his conversion.

How lamentable is the case of this unhappy people, who shut their eyes against the clearest evidence, and look for another Messiah, so many hundred years after the time fixed by their own prophets. Let us think of their blindness and obstinacy with pity ; and earnestly pray, that the Redeemer may “ come unto Sion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob ; and that all Israel may at length be saved *.”

The book of Daniel may be divided into two parts. The *first* is *historical*, and contains an account of various circumstances which happened to himself and the Jews, under several kings at Babylon. The *second* part is *prophetical*, and comprises the visions and prophecies with which he was favoured, and which enabled him to foretell many important events relating to the monarchies of the world, the time of the advent and death of the Messiah, the restoration of the Jews, and the conversion of the Gentiles.

The 1st chapter states, that, “ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God ; which he carried into the land of Shinar, to the house of his god,” which was *Bel* ; “ and he brought the vessels into the treasure-house of his god.” It is from this time that the 70 years’ captivity is to be reckoned. After this Jehoiakim humbled himself, became tributary to the king of Babylon, and was restored to his throne.

At the same time with Jehoiakim, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who were of the royal family, were carried captive, and Nebuchadnezzar

* Orton, Vol. VI. p. 273. Bishop Watson’s Answer to Paine, 8vo. p. 281.

ordered that certain of the royal and noble youths should be instructed in the learning of the Chaldeans, and fed from his table, and the names of the last three were changed to Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. But, as it was customary to offer some part of the beasts which they killed for food in sacrifice to their gods, and to pour out some of their wine as an offering to them; and, likewise, as it was killed and dressed in a manner in which they could not partake of it without being defiled, these four requested of the person who had the charge of them, that they might be permitted to live upon pulse and water; and God so blessed their temperance and piety, that they did better with this, than the others with the king's dainties; and they increased in comeliness and wisdom.

The II^d chapter gives an account of a remarkable *dream* which Nebuchadnezzar had, and which troubled him much, though he could not recollect the particulars of it; and he sent for all his magicians and wise men, and insisted upon their telling him what the dream was, and the meaning of it, or he would put them to death. Daniel, after prayer to God, in which he was assisted by his pious companions, undertook to tell him. He had seen "a great image, whose brightness was excellent,"—"and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay." He saw "till that a stone was cut out without hands," that is, cut out of a quarry, and thrown by an invisible power, "which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and

the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Then Daniel proceeds to explain, in some measure, what was the meaning of it; but it is only the events which followed, and which are now to be learned from history, which can explain it fully. The image was in fact an emblem, or representation, of the powers of the earth to the end of time. The resplendent head of *gold* was the empire of Babylon, which was, now, arrived at its greatest glory, extent and grandeur, particularly the magnificent city of Babylon, which was the wonder of the world, and called by Isaiah (xiv. 4.) "The golden city." The breast and arms, which were of *silver*, signifies the kingdom of the Medes and Persians, which arose quickly, in the days of his grandson Belshazzar, and continued between two and three hundred years. This was inferior to the former, as the empire was not so extensive, and the princes worse men. The belly and thighs of *brass* represented the Grecian kingdom, especially under Alexander the Great, who conquered the world. The Greeks were famous for their brazen armour, and, therefore, it is called a kingdom of *brass*. The legs and feet, which were of *iron*, represented the Roman empire; and the toes partly of iron, and partly of clay, represented the ten smaller kingdoms, into which it was, afterwards, divided, and of less firm materials. And "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands" represented the kingdom of the Messiah, which should be set up during the last of these kingdoms, (for the stone smote the image on

the feet,) and shews, that Christ was to have no successor; that there should be no revolution in his kingdom, but that he should destroy all opposing powers. Christ did not, indeed, destroy the former kingdoms, but he destroyed that in which they were included, their *heathen principles*; and will, at last, destroy all powers that are opposite to his interest, and will not submit to his authority.

On account of the wisdom displayed by Daniel, and the interest which the shewing the dream and the interpretation of it proved him to have with the great God of heaven and earth, Nebuchadnezzar promoted him and his companions to the chief places in the government of Babylon.

The III^d chapter, the 1st lesson at this morning's service, gives the account of the steadfast, the undaunted, the unconquerable piety of the three Hebrew youths, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. Nebuchadnezzar set up an image of gold, an idol, which every one was required to worship, on pain of being cast into a burning fiery furnace. The height was three score cubits, and the breadth six cubits, so that, it was, probably, set upon a high pillar, or column, which is included in the height mentioned, in order that every one might see it, though at a great distance. The signal for their falling down to worship was the hearing of all kind of instruments, probably, joining voices singing hymns to its praise. The multitude were assembled, the instruments sounded, and all nations, Babylonians, and their tributaries, and the Jews, fell down and worshipped, save only Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego,—they, either were not present, or, being present, would not fall down and worship. They knew, that worship was to be paid to Je-

hovah alone, let what would be the consequence. On this, "certain Chaldeans," who were, perhaps, envious that these foreigners had been preferred above them, accused them to the king, who, angry that his orders were disobeyed, and *that* by strangers promoted by him, sent for them, and questioned them as to the truth of the accusation; and added, with great arrogance and blasphemy, "who is that God, that shall deliver you out of my hands." The courage, the respect, and the piety of their answer is admirable, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." We had rather not make any reply, the case is so plain, that it admits of no deliberation; but, lest you should consider our not speaking, as a mark of disrespect, we say, that, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is *able* to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he *will* deliver us out of thine hand, O king."—Isaiah, xliii. 2, 3., had said to God's people, long before this, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the *fire*, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the *flame* kindle upon thee: For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."—But yet, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, thinking, that it *might* please God, for wise and gracious purposes, that they should fall a sacrifice in his cause, they add, "But, if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will *not* serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Nebuchadnezzar, full of fury at their refusal, and at what *he* would call their *obstinacy*, ordered the furnace to be heated seven times what was usual for other malefactors,—and they were cast in; but, so

furious were the flames, that they destroyed the executioners who bound and threw them in. Nebuchadnezzar himself witnessed the execution, he saw "the most mighty men" perish by the flames, and the youths fall down "bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace." But the fire had power only over the *CORDS* which bound them. "Nebuchadnezzar, the king, was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast *three* men bound into the midst of the fire?"—"Lo I see *four* men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt;—and the form of the *fourth* is like THE SON OF GOD." THE SON OF GOD! How should Nebuchadnezzar know any thing about THE SON OF GOD? Probably from Daniel, who had given him the whole history of the Jews, the creation of the world, the fall of man, the flood, the call of Abraham, the bondage in Egypt, the appearance of Jehovah in the burning bush to Moses, the Exodus, the sojourning in the wilderness, the presence of the Angel of the covenant, the Shekinah in the tabernacle and the temple, and the expected Messiah, the Son of God, the little stone cut out without hands, that was to become a mighty mountain. But this had made no effectual, no saving impression upon him,—as it does *not* upon thousands in these days,—it amused him for the time,—he judged it all, perhaps, no more true than the fables of his own gods,—but, now, the *work* of a more powerful God, than any of the gods of the heathen, was evident,—the presence of THE SON OF GOD,—the great I AM,—was before his eyes. "Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the Most High

God, come forth, and come hither." They came forth, and all saw that the fire had had no power whatever over them, or even over their garments. "Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who hath sent his Angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word," that is, refused obedience to his decree, and rendered it of no effect, "and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve, nor worship, any god, except their own God." He, then, made a decree, that none should speak against THE GOD, and promoted the youths to places of greater distinction.

My brethren, *we*, blessed be God! live in a country and an age, in which we are not called upon by an arbitrary prince to worship idols, under the fear of "the burning fiery furnace." Our fathers, however, in the times when the papists bore rule, between two and three hundred years ago, were called upon to do it, and to give up their Bibles, and to profess belief in blasphemous doctrines. And many of them evinced a constancy not inferior to that of the Hebrew youths in Babylon. But what have *we done*? What do *we do*? Do we, amidst an ungodly generation, do all we can to promote the honour of God? Do we worship Him, when at liberty to do it? Do we reverence his name, his sanctuary, and his people? Do we reprove those who profane them? Do we, according to our power and opportunities, restrain those whom we know to offend against him? If we do *not*, what should we do, if we were called to trials, to persecutions, to the flames?

The IVth chapter contains a very wonderful and awful account, which was written by Nebuchadnezzar himself, and, in the form of a royal proclamation,

was sent abroad, and directed to all men. It tells us of a dream which Nebuchadnezzar had, and which was interpreted for him by Daniel, that, if he continued in his pride, God would deprive him of his reason, and reduce him to the level of the beasts of the field. He did not profit by the warning, and was deprived of his reason for seven years, and, on his recovery, was brought to this confession, "I Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

The Vth chapter gives an awful account of the impious feast made by Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. His wives, and concubines, and a thousand of his lords were present; and, being flushed with wine, he sent for the gold and silver vessels, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem, and had placed in the temple of his own god Bel; so that the using of them thus was even a mark of disrespect to his own supposed god. They drank out of them, "and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone," that is, they, probably, sung songs, or hymns, in praise of them, and in prayer to them. While all was a scene of mirth and jollity, and riot, and drinking, and song and chorus,—there "came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote, over against the candlestick, upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed,—and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." But *why* this change of countenance, these troubled thoughts, this loos-

ening of his loins, and knocking of his knees? He cannot read the writing; it may be some message of *good*, some *answer* from the *gods* he is thus praising. No: it is his *conscience* rises up against him,—and tells him, that his life is wicked, and the very act in which he is engaged is an affront to ONE greater than the gods of Babylon. The astrologers and wise men are sent for, in haste, and rewards offered to him who shall read and expound the writing; but none can do it. The queen mother, who had not been present at the feast, enters and advises that Daniel should be sent for. Daniel arrives; and, like a faithful servant of God, first exhorts the king to repentance; and, then, declares the writing, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. And adds “This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE, God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL, thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.” The next word is, now, altered by Daniel, in the explanation, from UPHARSIN, to PERES, which is another form of the same word, and signifies both *to divide* and *the Persians*, who were to be the *dividers*, and means “thy kingdom is *divided*, and given to the Medes and *Persians*.” The king fulfilled his promise to Daniel, he ordered him the robe of “scarlet” and “chain of gold,” “and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom:” but he heeded, neither Daniel, nor the writing, and made no effort towards repentance; and, “in that night, was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain.” Cyrus had long besieged the city; but the king and inhabitants were confident and secure, because they thought it impregnable, and had provisions for twenty years within the walls. But, the river Euphrates running

through the city, Cyrus had a channel dug for it, in another direction; and, turning the course of the waters, while Belshazzar and his lords and the people were given up to drunkenness, he entered, by the channel of the river, slew Belshazzar, in the midst of his riot, and took the city.

My brethren, drunkenness and impiety, were not peculiar to Babylon and the worshippers of Bel,—there is many a *feast* among those who *call themselves* CHRISTIANS, and who profess to worship the TRUE GOD, which is, perhaps, *little, if at all*, inferior in sin and blasphemy to that of Belshazzar. Perhaps, (considering the superior light *we* enjoy under the Gospel, and that *wine*, with us, is consecrated as the emblem of Christ's *blood* shed upon the cross for our sins,) if I was to say they are *worse*, I should not be wrong. What are the generality of our *feasts*, our *harvest homes*, our *Christmas meetings*? Happy they whose consciences do *not* accuse them, who, when they are “weighed in the balances,”—and we *all* are weighed in God's balances—shall not be “found wanting.” [I would to God *I* could say, that, in *my* younger years, I had not been present at, and borne a part in, meetings, which were undoubtedly *impious* and *heathen*. I remember a *song* which was a great favourite, and was to be found in the popular collections of the day; it began,

“Come, jolly Bacchus, god of wine,
Crown this night with pleasure,”—and, so, on.

And the second verse began,

“Thus, mighty Bacchus, shalt thou be
Guardian to our pleasure,”—and, so, on.

Now, is not this as bad as Belshazzar's praising his gods of gold, and silver, and so forth?

It was from seeing the sin of this, and many other such *songs* and such *feasts*, when I became older, that, to do what lay within my power to correct such practices, I collected, and revised and published, twenty years since, *songs*, which might render such meetings, innocent, at least, and, if possible, instructive. That *some* improvement has taken place in some instances, I have reason to think. I wish I could say that *much* has. My brethren, let me exhort *you* to do *your parts* in promoting this desirable end.]

The VIth chapter, the first lesson at this evening's service, contains the remarkable account of Daniel's being cast into the den of lions, because he would still worship God, though commanded not to do so by a royal decree, and his being delivered from the lions: but the time will not allow me to enter into the particulars of it. [I, however, the less regret this, as I have repeatedly, on this Sunday, made it the subject of a separate discourse; and there is, likewise, one of the Cheap Repository Tracts on this subject, many copies of which I have given away in the parish.]

I will, however, make two short observations, one is, that Daniel was, at this time, upwards of 90 years of age. I mention this, because, in most of the pictures of this event, he is represented as a young, or middle-aged man. In a painting by an eminent living artist, he is represented as a youth, and naked.

Also, at the 22d verse, Daniel, when Darius came to the den, in the morning, to see whether he was alive, says, "My God hath sent *his angel*, and hath

shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me : forasmuch as, before him, innocency was found in me ; and, also, before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." Now, in all the pictures I have seen on this subject, I do not recollect to have seen one which has this angel ; which was, probably, the same which attended the three young men in the burning fiery furnace, the Angel of the covenant, the Son of God.

The latter part of the 23d verse, which I have taken as one of my texts, " So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God : " may be a source of consolation to believers in all ages. David, in the lviith Psalm, (verse 4.,) says, that his " soul is among lions ; " but says, also, " God shall send forth his mercy and truth." And in the xxiid Psalm, in which David is a type of Christ, he says, (verse 21.,) " Save me from the lion's mouth," but says, also, (verse 19.,) " Be not thou far from me, O Lord : thou art my succour ; haste thee to help me." And *we* may be assured, that God and his Angel are ever ready to succour those who truly believe and trust in him.

The remainder of this book, the VIIth chapter, to the end of the XIIth chapter, contains various prophecies and visions of things to come, until the advent and death of the Messiah, and the final conversion of the Jews and Gentiles to the faith of the Gospel.

The VIIth chapter contains Daniel's vision of the *four beasts*, and relates to the same kingdoms as Nebuchadnezzar's image in the IIId chapter, but with some additional circumstances. As Nebuchadnezzar-

zar's imagination was full of sublime ideas of grandeur and dominion, a human image of great lustre is represented before him : whereas, in Daniel's vision, the same empires were represented by wild, voracious beasts, as the great enemies of truth and righteousness, and the supporters of idolatry and tyranny.

The VIIIth chapter contains Daniel's vision of *the ram and the he-goat*, which relates to the Persian and Grecian monarchies, as explained by the angel.

In the IXth chapter, Daniel, understanding from the prophecies of Jeremiah, (xxv. 11, 12. xxix. 10.) that the 70 years' captivity were now drawing to a close, was engaged in fasting and prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem, when the angel Gabriel is sent to him. He informs the prophet that the holy city should be rebuilt and peopled, and should continue so for *seventy weeks*, that is prophetic weeks, or weeks of years, a day for a year, or 490 years ; at the end of which, it should be utterly destroyed for putting the Messiah to death. The beginning of this period is fixed to the time when the order was issued for rebuilding the temple, in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes. (Ezra vii. 11.) Seven weeks, or 49 years, was the temple in building (Dan. ix. 25.); sixty-two weeks, or 434 years more, bring us to the public announcing of the Messiah, at the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry ; and about one prophetic week, or 7 years, added to this, will bring us to the time of our Saviour's passion, or the 23d year of the Christian æra,—in all 490 years, according to the prophecy. The latter part of the prophecy relates to the second destruction of the temple and government, and the second coming of the Messiah.

The Xth chapter, to the end, contains Daniel's fourth, and last, prophetic vision, in the third year of the reign of Cyrus, in which he is informed of various particulars relating to the Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires, and the kingdom of the Messiah. It is delivered in the plainest words, without types and images, as in the former visions.

Those who wish to enter fully into these prophecies must consult a commentary, or the Dissertations of Bishop Newton and Mr. Faber. I, now, only just observe to you, in general, "how particular and circumstantial this prophecy is. No historian gives so concise and comprehensive an account of the affairs of these kingdoms as this prophecy does. It is a glorious attestation of the truth of the Bible, and an evident proof of the foreknowledge of God, no one could thus declare the times and the seasons, but He who hath them in his own power. All these contingent events were foreknown and foretold by him. The enemies of revelation pretend, that it was written *after* the events; contrary to all the proof which the nature of such things, in such cases, will admit of. But, by their opposition to the Bible, they are only, like the infidel Jews, mentioned xi. 14., 'establishing the vision, and confirming the prophecy:' for 'not one word of God shall fall to the ground*.'"

"Upon the whole," we may exclaim, with Bishop Newton, "What an amazing prophecy is this! comprehending so many various events, and extending through so many successive ages, from the first establishment of the Persian empire, above 530

* Orton, Vol. VI. p. 253.

years before Christ, to the general resurrection ! And the farther it extends, and the more it comprehends, the more amazing, surely, and the more divine it must appear.”—“ What stronger and more convincing proofs can be given, or required, of a Divine Providence, and a Divine Revelation *.”

* Vol. I. 9th Edition, p. 413. Orton, Vol. VI. p. 260. Horne, Vol. VI. p. 216.

SERMON XLIII.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—HOSEA—JOEL—AMOS—
OBADIAH—JONAH—MICAH.

MICAH vi. 8.

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

ON Sunday last, we considered the book of Daniel, which is the last of what are called the *greater* prophets, not from their foretelling greater things, but from their bulk, or length. To them follow the twelve *lesser* prophets, called so from their prophecies being shorter. The first lessons, this day, are the II^d chapter of Joel, and the VIth of Micah; and, on Sunday next, the II^d of Habakkuk, and the Ist of Proverbs. I purpose, therefore, to consider, this day, the first six of the lesser prophets, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah;—and the latter six on Sunday next; and to begin the book of Proverbs on the Sunday following, as we shall dwell upon that for five Sundays: that is, there are lessons appointed from Proverbs for five whole Sundays; but we shall, this year, have but four Sundays.

Of the family of HOSEA we have no certain information, except what we learn from the 1st verse of

his prophecy, which states, that he was the son of Beerî; but who *he* was we do not know. Hosea prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahaz, and in the third year of Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the reign of Jeroboam the II^d, king of Israel; and it is most probable, that he was an Israelite, and lived in the kingdom of Samaria, or of the ten tribes, as his prophecies are chiefly directed against their wickedness and idolatry. But, with the severest denouncings of vengeance, he blends promises of mercy; and his passings from one to the other are frequently sudden and unexpected. He foretells, in the clearest and strongest terms, the ingrafting of the Gentiles into the Church of God. He alludes, xi. 1, to the calling of our Lord from Egypt, vi. 2, to the resurrection on the third day; he touches, i. 7, but only in general terms, upon the final overthrow of the anti-christian army in Palestine, by the immediate interference of Jehovah; and, xiii. 14, he celebrates, in the loftiest strains of triumph and exultation, the Saviour's final victory over death and hell. The VIth and XIVth chapters contain earnest invitations to all sinners to return to God, and encouraging promises to those who do return. Mr. Cecil remarks, that, "In reading the Scriptures we are apt to think God further removed from us than from the persons to whom he spake therein. The knowledge of God will rectify this error;—as if God *could be* farther from us than from them. In reading the Old Testament especially, we are apt to think, that the things spoken there, in the prophet *Hosea*, for instance, have little relation to us. The knowledge taught by Christian experience will rectify this error;—as if religion

were not *always* the *same sort* of transaction between God and the soul *."

Concerning the prophet JOEL we have no information, except what is contained in the 1st verse, or title, of his prophecy, that he was the son of Pethuel; and concerning his family, condition, pursuits, and the time in which he lived, there is great difference of opinion among learned men. The most probable conjecture is, that he prophesied during the reign of Azariah, called also Uzziah; and, consequently, that he lived at the same time with Amos and Hosea, if, indeed, he did not prophesy before Amos. This opinion is supported by the following reasons:—
1. Only Egypt and Edom are mentioned, iii. 19, among the enemies of Judah, nothing being said of the Assyrians and Babylonians. 2dly, Joel, iii. 4—7, denounces the same judgments, as Amos does, in his 1st chapter 9—11 verses, against the people of Tyre and Sidon and Edom, who had invaded the kingdom of Judah, carried off its inhabitants, and sold them as slaves to the Gentiles. 3dly, It appears, from Joel ii. 15—17, that, at the time he flourished, the Jews were in the full enjoyment of their religious worship. 4thly, ii. 18, 19, more prosperous times are promised to Judea, together with uncommon plenty. 5thly, Although Joel foretells the calamity of famine and barrenness of the land, it is plain, from Amos iv. 6, 7, that the *Israelites* had not only suffered from the same calamity, but were, even then, labouring under it.

This book consists of three chapters, which may be divided into three discourses, or parts.

Part the *first*, contained in chapter I., and to the

* Cecil's Remains, p. 203.

end of verse 11 of chapter II., is, chapter I. an exhortation, both to the priests and to the people, to repent, by reason of the famine brought upon them by the palmer-worm, and other devouring insects, in consequence of their sins, which is followed, chapter II, to the end of verse 11, by a denouncing of still greater calamities, if they continued impenitent. This discourse contains a double prophecy, to be applied, in its first sense, to a plague of locusts, which was to devour the land, and was to be accompanied with so severe a drought and famine, as should cause the public service of the temple to be interrupted; and, in its second sense, it means the invasion of Judea by Babylon,—and, perhaps, also, the invasions of the Persians, Greeks and Romans, by whom the Jews were, in their turns, conquered.

Part the *second*, ch. II. verse 12—17., is an exhortation to keep a public and solemn fast, with, verse 18—26., a promise of removing the calamities of the Jews on their repentance. And, verse 27—32., from the fertility and prosperity of the land, described before, the prophet passes to the rich blessings of the gospel, and, particularly, in the pouring out of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and which we find, from St. Peter, Acts ii. 17—21., was fulfilled, in one sense, or instance, at least, on that famous day of Pentecost, and with these he connects the destruction of the Jewish nation and government in rejecting the Gospel; giving, also, promises of safety to the faithful and penitent, which were, afterwards, faithfully, and remarkably, fulfilled to the Christians, in that great national calamity. The chapter begins, “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain.” In the xth chapter of the book of Numbers, 1—10 verses, we learn what was the law and

institution of trumpets, and the several uses of them; namely, to proclaim war, and to call the assembly together to public worship, as we do by bells, and for various other occasions. In this 1st verse, the alarm of war seems to be intended; and, in the 15th verse, the call to public worship, a solemn fast. Here God commands the Levites to “blow the trumpet,” that “all the inhabitants of the land” might have due notice, and timely warning of the approaching war, which God himself was about to wage with them for [their sins. The day of battle was fixed, “a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness,” as that day appeared to the camp of Israel, when God descended upon mount Sinai, which made all the people, and even the mount, yea Moses himself, to tremble and quake exceedingly. From which we learn, not only that the judgments of God are truly terrible, always at hand, and ever ready to fall upon the wicked; but, at the same time, for our comfort, that he never strikes without giving warning; that he will not surprise us in our sins; but, by his ministers, by the *silver trumpet* of his *Word*, he gives fair warning of the danger, and timely notice to prepare for battle, or to sue for peace*.

The 13th verse is among those sentences which are appointed to be read, at the discretion of the minister, at the beginning of morning and evening service, “Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.” In order to understand which fully, it is necessary to consider, that it

* See Wogan, Vol. IV. p. 358.

was customary with the Jews, upon dreadful and sorrowful occasions, to rend their garments, and *custom* made them do this often without feeling any sorrow, or contrition, or repentance, or indignation. The prophet, therefore, exhorts them to *rend* their *hearts*; that is, to feel deep sorrow and remorse, *rather than*, or *as well as* to, rend their garments; for it would be of no avail to do *that*, unless, at the same time, they turned unto the Lord God with the deepest contrition.

At the 17th verse, the prophet says, "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord." It is in conformity with this, that the reading-desk in our churches is placed "between the porch and the altar;" and that our *Litany*, a solemn service of humiliation and supplication, is there offered to God and Christ, "Spare us, good Lord, spare thy people whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us forever."

Part the *third*, the III^d chapter, foretells the general conversion and return of the Jews, and the destruction of their enemies, together with the glorious state of the Church which is to follow.

The manner and language of Joel is beautiful and lofty poetry, and he is, at the same time, full and clear. In the first two chapters, he displays the full force of the prophetic poetry; and his descriptions of the plague of locusts, of the deep repentance of the nation, and of the happy state of the Christian Church, in the last times of the Gospel, are wrought up with admirable force and beauty.

Amos, from what he says of himself, in the 1st chapter and the 1st verse, was, probably, a native of

Tekoah, a small town in the kingdom of Judah, on the south of Jerusalem. He tells us, also, VII. 14., that he was “no prophet, neither a prophet’s son,” that is, that he was not educated in the schools of the prophets founded by Samuel, but was called to the office especially by God, from being a herdsman and a gatherer, or cultivator, of sycamore fruit. He prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah king of Judah, and of Jeroboam II, the son of Joash, and lived at the same *time* with Hosea, though, probably, not so *long*, with Jonah, and, probably, also, with Joel.

The book of Amos contains nine chapters, or discourses, and may be divided into three parts.

Part the *first*, to the end of the 3d verse of chapter II., contains the judgments of God denounced against the neighbouring Gentile nations, the Syrians, the Philistines, the people of Tyre, the Edomites, the Ammonites and the Moabites.

The *second* part, from II. 4., to IX. 10., contains the judgments of God denounced against Judah and Israel for their sins.

Part the *third*, the 11th verse of the IXth chapter, to the end of the 15th verse, or end of the book, sets forth the consoling, or evangelical, promises, describing the restoration of the Church by the Messiah, first, under the type of raising up the fallen tabernacle of David, verse 11, 12.; and, secondly, announcing magnificent temporal blessings, namely, great abundance, return from captivity, and re-establishment in their own land, all of which were prophetic of the blessings to be bestowed under the reign of the Messiah, verse 13—15.

Several of this prophet’s images, or metaphors, are borrowed from those rural objects, which were

familiar to him as a herdsman ; his sentiments are, frequently, lofty, though plain ; for Isaiah and Daniel, at the court, and Amos, with his cattle, were inspired by the same Holy Spirit.

OBADIAH is the next in order of the prophets, as they stand in our Bible ; but it is uncertain at what time he lived and prophesied. Some suppose him to have been the same person who was governor of Ahab's house, and who hid and fed an hundred prophets whom Jezebel would have destroyed. Others think he was the Obadiah whom Josiah made overseer of the works of the temple, mentioned 2 Chron. xxxiv. 12. But the most probable opinion is, that he prophesied between the taking of Jerusalem, (which happened in the year 587 before Christ,) and the destruction of Idumea, by Nebuchadnezzar, which took place about five years after. If so, he lived partly at the same time with Jeremiah, one of whose prophecies includes the greater part of Obadiah's book ; as you may see, by comparing Obad. 1—9., with Jerem. xlix. 14, 15, 16, 7, 9, 10. The book consists of only one chapter. It is written with much beauty, and unfolds a very interesting scene of prophecy. It is called, verse 1, *a vision* ; but we have no account of any thing he *saw* ; the word may be used to signify any *message* by a prophet.

The prophecy consists of two parts, namely,

Part the *first*, to the end of verse 16, denounces the destruction of the children of Edom, for their pride and carnal security, and for their cruel insults and enmity to the Jews after the taking of their city by Nebuchadnezzar.

Part the *second*, verse 18 to 21, is consoling, and foretells the restoration of the Jews, their victory over their enemies, and their flourishing state in con-

sequence. This prophecy was, in part, accomplished, by the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, and by the victories of the Maccabees : but the last verse will not receive its complete fulfilment until that time, when, according to Rev. xi. 15., “ the kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.”

The prophet JONAH stands next. He informs us, in the 1st verse, that he was the son of Amittai, and we learn, 2 Kings xiv. 25, that they were of Gath-hepher, which place, we learn, Joshua xix. 13., was in Galilee, in the tribe of Zebulun. The passage in 2 Kings xiv. 25., states, that Jonah had prophesied concerning Jeroboam the II^d, the son of Joash king of Israel, restoring “ the coast of Israel, from the entering of Hamath, unto the sea of the plain.” That prophecy was, probably, delivered by Jonah in the reign of Joash, the father of Jeroboam, when his kingdom was much pressed by the Syrians, as we are told 2 Kings xiii. 3, 4, 7 and xiv. 26. Excepting the sublime *ode*, or prayer, in the second chapter, the prophecy of Jonah is a simple narrative, or story.

It is very probable, that, when Jonah promised the restoring and enlarging of the coasts of Israel, when both the king and the people were exceedingly wicked, that he, also, invited them to repentance and reformation. But the Israelites still continuing impenitent, God took occasion to send him to Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire to denounce the divine judgments against its wicked inhabitants. Jonah, endeavouring to fly away from his commission, was cast into the sea from the ship in which he was sailing to Tarshish, and was swallowed by a great fish ; not that he might be destroyed, but that, by his miraculous deliverance,

(preparing Jonah to preach more faithfully, and the Ninevites to hear more effectually,) the people of Israel might be provoked to repent by the repentance of Nineveh. The time of Jonah's continuing in the belly of the fish was a type of our Lord's continuing in the grave, as appears from what our Lord says to the Scribes and Pharisees, Luke xi. 30.

The book shews, by the very striking example of the Ninevites, the long-suffering of God towards sinners, who are spared on their sincere repentance, and from their repentance Jesus Christ takes occasion, Matt. xii. 41, to reprove the hard-heartedness of the Jews. God made use of a heathen king who was penitent, to punish the impenitency of the kingdom of Israel, in which view, the Ninevites might be said to rise up in judgment against the Israelites. The evidence offered by Jonah was sufficient to lead the Ninevites to repentance; while the Jews, who had the greater evidence of miracles and the fulfilment of prophecy, and the more convincing evidence of our Lord's doctrine, continued obstinately impenitent.

The book of Jonah consists of four chapters, and may be divided into two parts.

The *first* part, the first two chapters, gives an account of his first mission to Nineveh, and his attempt to flee to Tarshish, and his being prevented, together with his delivery from the stomach of the great fish which had swallowed him.

The *second* part, in the III^d and IVth chapters, gives an account of his second mission, and its happy consequence to the Ninevites, who, awakened by the prophet's preaching, repented in dust and ashes; and the discontent of Jonah, who, dreading to be thought a false prophet, repined at the divine mercy, in

sparing the Ninevites, whose destruction he seems to have expected. No reproof can be more gentle than that given by God to the murmuring prophet, in the IVth chapter, the 10th and 11th verses, from his lamenting for the withering of a gourd, and, yet, wishing, that the whole people of Nineveh and their cattle should be destroyed. What an endearing picture is this of Him “whose tender mercies are over all his works.”

It may be supposed that Jonah deeply repented of both his first refusal to go to Nineveh, and of his displeasure at God’s sparing the Ninevites; which appears from his giving so impartial an account of the whole matter; and, modestly, leaving it to be inferred from the tenor of his history*.

MICAH informs us, in the first verse of his book, that he was a *Morasthite*; that is, a native of *Morasthi*, a small town in the southern part of the land of Judah; and that he prophesied in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of that country: and, consequently, he lived at the same time with Isaiah, Joel, Hosea and Amos.

The people of Judah and Israel being very profane and impenitent, in the days of Isaiah, (in consequence of which the Assyrian captivity was, then, hastening upon Israel, and the Babylonian, not long after, fell upon Judah), the prophet Micah was raised up to second Isaiah, and to confirm his predictions against the Jews and Israelites whom he invited to repentance, both by threatened judgments, and by promised mercies.

This book contains seven chapters, which may be

* See some farther remarks on Jonah, in Sermon LXIII.

divided into *three* parts. After the introduction, or title, in the 1st verse,

The *first* part extends only to the end of the 1st chapter. It contains the prophecies delivered in the reign of Jotham king of Judah and Pekah king of Israel, in which the divine judgments are denounced, against both Judah and Israel for their sins.

The *second* part, contained in the II^d and III^d and to the end of the 8th verse of the IVth chapter, sets forth the prophecies delivered in the reigns of Ahaz king of Judah, (with whom his son Hezekiah was joined in the government, during the latter part of his life,) and of Pekah king of Israel, who, also, lived at the same time. In this discourse, Micah foretells the captivity of both nations: and particularly threatens Israel for their enmity to the house of David, and Judah for their cruelty to the pious. He, then, vindicates himself as a prophet sent by God, and foretells the triumphant state of the church, which is yet to come.

The *third* part, from the 9th verse of the IVth chapter, to the end of the book, contains the prophecies delivered by Micah during the reign of Hezekiah king of Judah, the first six years of whose government were at the same time with the greater part of the reign of Hoshea, the last king of Israel. In this portion of the book, the Jews are threatened with the Babylonish captivity; the total overthrow of Sennacherib's forces is foretold; and the pious king Hezekiah is assured of God's preservation by a new promise of the Messiah who should descend from him, and by a prediction of Sennacherib's murder. The people are, then, forewarned of the judgments that would befall them for their sins in the reign of

Manasseh, the wickedness of whose reign is, farther, described, together with his captivity and return from Babylon; as, also, the return of the Jews from Babylon, and from their general dispersion, after they shall be converted to the Gospel.

The prophet Micah, I have already stated, lived at the same time with Isaiah; and, in his Vth chapter, the 2d, 3d, and 4th verses, he has given a *summary*, or short statement, of the prophecies delivered by Isaiah concerning the Messiah, and the final return of the Jews: "But, thou, BETH-LEHEM EPHRATAH, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall HE come forth unto me that is to be RULER IN ISRAEL; WHOSE GOINGS FORTH HAVE BEEN FROM OF OLD, FROM EVERLASTING. Therefore will he give them up until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth."

This prophecy, it may be remarked, consists of *four* parts, 1st. The human birth-place of Christ. 2dly. His eternal generation, or being "the everlasting Son of the Father." 3dly. His deserting the Jews, for a time, until his miraculous birth of the virgin, after which they are to return with the true Israelites. 4thly. His spiritual and universal dominion.

The application of the first part of this prophecy was decided at the time of OUR SAVIOUR's birth, by the most respectable Jewish synod that ever sate, called together by Herod, to determine from prophecy the birth-place of the MESSIAH, which they

agreed to be *Bethlehem*, upon the authority of Micah, which they cited: It is given, Matt. ii. 6., “And, thou, *Bethlehem*, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel.”

This prophecy of Micah, is, perhaps, the most important single prophecy in the Old Testament; and the most comprehensive, respecting the personal character of the MESSIAH and his successive manifestation to the world. It crowns the whole chain of prophecies descriptive of the several limitations of “the blessed seed of the woman” to the line of Shem, to the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the tribe of Judah, and to the royal house of David, here terminating in his birth at *Bethlehem*, “the city of David.” It carefully distinguishes his human nativity from his eternal generation; foretells the rejection of the Israelites and Jews for a season; their final restoration, and the universal *peace* destined to prevail throughout the earth in the *Regeneration*. It forms, therefore, the basis of the New Testament, which begins with his human birth at Bethlehem, the miraculous circumstances of which are recorded in the introductions of Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels, his eternal generation, as the ORACLE, or WISDOM, in the sublime introduction of John’s Gospel: his prophetic character and second coming, illustrated in the four *Gospels* and *Epistles*, ending with a prediction of the speedy approach of the latter in the *Apocalypse* *.” (Rev. xxii. 20.)

I have taken the 8th verse of the VIth chapter as the text to this discourse, for the same reason, as,

* Dr. Hales’s Analysis of Chronology, vol. ii. book i. pp. 462, 463, quoted in Horne’s Introduction, vol. iv. p. 192.

on the seventeenth Sunday after Trinity, I took the 27th verse of the xviiiith chapter of Ezekiel, namely, because it is greatly misunderstood, and is a favourite text with those who hold the doctrine of justification by works, without a necessity of faith in Christ and other points: and, what is still more remarkable, it is a great favourite with *proud* persons,—and every unregenerate man *is proud*. But let us consider the passage:

The prophet, at the beginning of this chapter, returns to speak of his own times, and of the controversy which the Lord hath with his people. He then supposes one of them as saying, at the 6th verse, “Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Or does he expect a more costly sacrifice? “Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?” Oil accompanied all their meat offerings: “shall I give my first-born,” the dearest of my offspring, as we know many of the heathen nations did, “for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” The prophet, then, answers, in the words of my text, “He hath shewed thee, O man,” (that is, by reason and conscience, and his written law,) “what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy,—and to walk humbly with thy God?” Now, how much is contained in this! Let any one give the same kind of interpretation and extension to these particulars, that our Lord does to the Commandments, in his Sermon on the mount, and then ask himself,—Do *I* “do justly”—“love mercy”—“and walk humbly with my God?” Do I do what is exactly *just* between man and man, in

every particular ? Do I do to others, as I would be done by ? Am I merciful, compassionate, kind and loving to others, as I would have others be to me ? Do I “ walk humbly with my God,” as a fallen creature, as sinful “ dust and ashes” (Gen. xviii. 27.) should do ? Is it to walk humbly with God, to think that we have no sins, or but few, to answer for ? That we do not stand in need of a Mediator, and of an atonement ? Or, that, if we do, it is only for trifling infirmities, for which our many good qualities will compensate ; or, if not quite that, that, then, Christ’s merits will just come in, and turn the scale in our favour ? No. If we would walk humbly with our God, we must receive him as he is revealed to us in his holy word, THE BIBLE : and, not only as he is revealed to us in the *Old Testament*, but we, Christians, under the Gospel, are to receive him and his Son and his Holy Spirit, and to consider of ourselves, as is plainly revealed, in THE GOSPEL.

To walk humbly with our God, then, is to consider ourselves as fallen, lost creatures, wholly dead in trespasses and sins, and the subjects of God’s wrath ; till He, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, provided a ransom and a remedy for us, in his blessed Son, who took our nature upon him ; and, clothed in mortality, died upon the cross, a sacrifice for the sins of all who will, by faith, receive him as such, and turn to God in penitence and holiness, praying for and receiving the Holy Spirit, as his unspeakable gift, to sanctify and lead us in the way of God, and bring us, in the power of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to life everlasting. Which, that we may all attain, O God—Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity,—do thou grant.

SERMON XLIV.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

NAHUM—HABAKKUK—ZEPHANIAH—HAGGAI—ZECHARIAH—
MALACHI.

HABAKKUK II. 4.

The just shall live by his faith.

ON Sunday last we considered the first six of the lesser prophets. The first lessons for this day are the IId chapter of Habakkuk, and the Ist chapter of Proverbs. But, as we shall be, for several Sundays, engaged with the book of Proverbs, I will, this day, consider the last six of the lesser prophets,—Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi,—and leave Proverbs to Sunday next.

The prophet NAHUM calls himself, in the introduction, or title, of his prophecy, the Elkoshite, that is a native, or inhabitant, of Elkosh, or Elkosha, a village of Galilee, in the tribe of Simeon. There is very great uncertainty as to the precise time when he lived; some making him to have lived at the same time with Jotham, others with Manasseh, and others with Josiah. The most probable opinion is that, which places him between the carrying the ten tribes captive, by the king of Assyria, and the captivity of Judah, by the king of Babylon, about the year 715 before Christ: and, as the design of this

prophet is to denounce God's vengeance upon Nineveh and the Assyrians, for their cruel tyranny over the Israelites, and as the captivity of the ten tribes took place in the tenth year of Hoshea king of Israel, (2 Kings xvii. 6, &c. compared with 2 Kings xviii. 9—11.), it is most probable, that Nahum prophesied against the Assyrians, for their warning, and for the comfort of the people of God, towards the close of Hezekiah's reign, about 90 years after Jonah, and about 60 years before the destruction of Nineveh.

It seems, that the people of Nineveh, like those of other great cities abounding in wealth and luxury, having become exceedingly corrupt in their morals, God commissioned Jonah to preach to them the necessity of repentance, as the only means of preventing their instant destruction: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." (Jonah iii. 4.) But such was the success of his preaching, that, both the king and people, repented, and turned from their evil ways, and the divine judgment was delayed for a time. It appears, however, that this repentance was of no long continuance; for, falling back into their former wickedness, the prophet Nahum was commissioned to denounce the final and unavoidable ruin of Nineveh and the Assyrian empire by the Chaldeans, and, consequently, the deliverance of the Jews who were held captive by them: thus, *comforting* them in their present miseries, according to his *name*, *Nahum* signifying a *comforter*.

The prophecy is one entire poem, which, opening with a lofty description of the justice and power of God, tempered with long-suffering, I. 1—8., foretells, 9—12., the destruction of Sennacherib's forces, and the overthrow of the Assyrian empire, together with,

13—15, the deliverance of Hezekiah and the death of Sennacherib. In the IId and IIId chapters, the destruction of Nineveh is foretold, and described with great minuteness.

Perhaps none of the lesser prophets equal Nahum in sublimity, fire and boldness of spirit. The opening of the prophecy is truly noble. The preparation for the destruction of Nineveh, and the description of its downfall and desolation, are expressed in the strongest colours, and with images that are truly moving and lofty. So complete has been the destruction of Nineveh, that even the ruins of it are not known. “How dangerous is it to trifle with the forbearance of the Almighty! His enemies are destroyed—his Church stands for ever *.”

St. Paul, Romans x. 15, applies the 15th verse of the Ist chapter of Nahum,—“Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth *good tidings*, that publisheth peace!”—to the publishing the Gospel, that “good tidings of great joy to all people,” (Luke ii. 10.)—“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.”

We have no certain information respecting the tribe, or birth-place of HABAKKUK. It is probable, that he prophesied in Jerusalem, in the reign of Jehoiakim, and, consequently, that he lived at the same time with Jeremiah; and the subject of his prophecy is the same with that of Jeremiah, namely, the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for the heinous sins of the Jewish people, and the consolation of the faithful amid all their national calamities.

* Bickersteth's Help, p. 47.

Habakkuk holds a distinguished rank among the sacred poets. Whoever reads his prophecy, must be struck with the grandeur of his imagery and the sublimity of his style, especially of the ode, or hymn, or prayer, in the IIId chapter, which hardly any thing of the kind can be supposed to excel. The 17th and 18th verses are peculiarly beautiful and pious. There is *A Harvest Hymn* founded upon them, which begins,

Praise to God, immortal praise,
For the love that crowns our days!
Bounteous source of every joy,
Let thy praise our tongues employ.

It is well known, I trust, to my hearers, [as it is in those *Tracts of Songs*, of which so many have been circulated in this parish.]

The prophecy of Habakkuk consists of three chapters, which may be divided into *two parts*.

The *first* part is contained in the Ist and IIId chapters. The prophet, 1—4., complaining of the growth of iniquity among the Jews, God is introduced, 5—11, announcing the Babylonish captivity, as a punishment for their wickedness. The prophet, then, 12—17. II. 1., humbly expostulates with God for punishing the Jews by means of the Chaldeans. In answer to this complaint, God, II. 2—4., replies, that he will, in due time, perform his promises to his people, of deliverance by the Messiah, implying, also, the nearer deliverance by Cyrus. The destruction of the Babylonian empire is then foretold, 5—20, together with the judgment that would be inflicted upon the Chaldeans for their covetousness, cruelty, and idolatry.

The *second* part, contained in the IIIId chapter, is

the hymn, or prayer, of Habakkuk, in which, 1, 2., he implores God to hasten the deliverance of his people; and takes occasion, 3—16., to recount the wonderful works of the Almighty in conducting his people through the wilderness, and giving them possession of the promised land; whence he encourages himself, and other pious persons, to rely upon God for making good his promises to their posterity in after ages.

The 3d and 4th verses of the IId chapter have occasioned some difficulty to commentators, and especially as to whom belong the words, “Behold, his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him; but the *Just* shall live by his *faith*,” whether they belong to what goes *before*, or to what *follows*. As they stand in our present translation, they fall in most naturally with what follows, and must be interpreted of the proud Babylonian, Nebuchadnezzar, who, being exalted with his victories, wealth and large empire, and imagining that no God was able to deliver people out of *his hand*, had, certainly, a heart puffed up with vain conceit, and which quickly burst into air, and came to nothing. Whereas, many of the most abject captives, who had *faith* enough to believe that God “doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Daniel iv. 35.); and, in consequence of this *faith* humbled themselves before him, and made supplication to him to be merciful unto them, and to deliver them out of their miserable condition, and seriously repented of their sins; such captives in reward of their *faith*, survived their oppressor, and *were restored to their own country*. This is, indeed, a very good sense, but the *seventy* Greek

interpreters translate the former part of the verse differently, “If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him: but the *just* shall live by *faith*.” and this is the meaning, as given by St. Paul, in the xth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the 38th verse, “Now the *just* shall live by *faith*: but, if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

The words, thus interpreted, in Habakkuk, must be connected with the *foregoing* verse, together with which they make this sense, that, whereas Habakkuk had demanded of God, How he would make good those promises to his people, which were not yet fulfilled, if he was determined to send them into captivity? God’s answer is this, that he has the times and seasons in his own hands, when he will fulfil all his words, none of which can fail: that it is our duty to rely upon his word, and to live in the firm persuasion of the truth of his promises: that, if any of us withdraw our obedience, and reject any article of his word, because it is not yet accomplished, we shall fall under his heavy displeasure; but, that “He who endureth to the end shall be saved.” This is a very pious sense, and worthy of the oracles of God. But it is still fuller, if we render part of the 3d verse according to the version of the *seventy*, and the quotation of St. Paul, “Though He tarry, wait for Him; for He that cometh, will come, and will not tarry,” beyond his appointed time; and, with the apostle, understand them of the Messiah, who is often styled “He that cometh, or should come, into the world.” So we hear the Jews inquiring of John the Baptist, Matt. xi. 3., “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” And, again, Matt. xxi. 9., xxiii. 39., the multitude sung “Hosanna to the Son

of David : Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord *."

The Apostle, both in Hebrews x. 38., and, also, Romans i. 17., quotes the passage, "The *just* shall live by faith," in support of the doctrine, that our *justification* before God is, wholly and solely, by *faith*, that is "a faith which *worketh* by *love*," (Gal. v. 6.,) as an evidence of its *life*, of its being a LIVING FAITH. Thus St. Paul saith, Rom. iv. 3., "Abraham *believed* God, and it was counted unto him for *righteousness*." Then, in the 4th and 5th verses, he says, "Now, to him that *worketh*," that is, who places his *dependance* upon his *works*, and considers them as absolutely *good* and *pure* in the sight of an all-good and all-pure God, "is the reward reckoned, not of *grace*, but of *debt*. But, to him that *worketh* not," that is, who does not do his *works* as the means of procuring his justification and salvation from God, disregarding the merits and atonement of CHRIST, "but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his FAITH is counted for RIGHTEOUSNESS."

The prophet ZEPHANIAH, as he tells us, at the beginning of his prophecy, was "the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah," and is supposed to have been of the tribe of Simeon; but, though he has mentioned his fathers for no less than four generations, nothing more is known of them now. We learn, however, from his book, that he delivered his prophecy in the reign of Josiah; consequently, he prophesied about the time that Jeremiah entered on his office, and he greatly resembles him in subject and method.

Zephaniah has been considered, by some, as deli-

* Reading's Sermons, Vol. IV. p. 64.

vering in brief, or in a short way, what Jeremiah delivered at greater length; but it is plain, that he prophesied *before* Jeremiah, because Jeremiah, in his IIId chapter, the 5th, 20th, and 22d verses, seems to speak of those abuses, as being, in some measure, removed, which Zephaniah, i. 4, 5, 9., describes as existing in the most wicked extent. From his account of the wickedness prevailing in Judah, it is probable, that he discharged the office of a prophet before the *eighteenth* year of Josiah; that is before this great prince had reformed the abuses and corruptions of his dominions. The style of Zephaniah is poetical, though it is not marked by any striking, or uncommon, beauties.

His prophecy, which consists of three chapters, may be divided into four sections, or parts.

The *first* part, in the Ist chapter, contains a denouncing of God's wrath against Judah for their idolatry.

The *second*, II. 1—3., declares that repentance is the only means to avoid the divine vengeance.

The *third*, II. 4—15., contains prophecies against the Philistines, the Moabites, and Ammonites, Ethiopia, and Nineveh.

The *fourth* part, the IIIId chapter, the captivity of the Jews by the Babylonians is foretold, together with their final restoration, and the prosperous state of the Church.

The prophet HAGGAI is the tenth in order of the lesser prophets, and the first of the three who were commissioned to make known the divine will to the Jews after their return from Babylon. Nothing is certainly known concerning his tribe, or birth-place. It is supposed, that he was born at Babylon, and was one of the Jews who returned with Zerubbabel, in

consequence of the edict of Cyrus to rebuild the temple. The times of his prophecies, however, are so distinctly marked by himself, that we have as much certainty on this point, as we have with respect to any of the prophets.

The occasion of his prophecy was this: The Jews who were released from captivity in the first year of the reign of Cyrus, (Ezra i. 1., &c.), having returned to Jerusalem, and begun to rebuild the temple, (Ezra iii.), were interrupted in their undertakings by the neighbouring lords, who contrived to set the king of Persia against them, (iv. 1, 24,) until the second year of Darius. Discouraged by these hindrances, the people ceased, for fourteen years, to go on with the second building of the temple, as if the time were not yet come, and applied themselves to the building of their own houses: but God, disposing Darius to renew the decree of Cyrus, raised up the prophet Haggai, about the year 520 before Christ; and, in consequence of his exhortations, they went on with the work, which was completed in a few years. And, farther, in order to encourage them to proceed in this undertaking, the prophet assured them, from God, that the glory of the latter house should far exceed the glory of the former.

The book of the prophet Haggai, as it stands in our Bible, is divided into two chapters; but it consists of *three* distinct prophecies, or discourses.

Discourse the *first*, I. chapter, contains a severe reproof of the people, especially of the governor and high-priest, for their delay in rebuilding the temple, which neglect was the cause of the unfruitful seasons, and other marks of the divine displeasure, with which they had been visited. The obedience of the go-

vernors and people to the prophet's message is then related.

In the *second* Discourse, II. 1—19, The prophet comforts the aged men, who, when young, had beheld the splendour of the first temple, and, now, wept for the less magnificence of the second temple, — by foretelling, that its glory should be greater than that of the first; which was, in due time, fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ honouring it with his presence and preaching. Haggai, then, foretells a fruitful harvest, as a reward for carrying on the building.

In the *third* Discourse, ii. 20—23, The prophet foretells the setting up of Messiah's kingdom under the name of Zerubbabel.

The manner of this prophet is not lofty poetry, but plain, yet vehement, when he reproveth; it is, however, mixed with parts very sublime and affecting, when he treats of the advent of the Messiah, whom he calls "the desire of all nations."

The prophet ZECHARIAH, in the beginning of his book, mentions the names of both his father and grandfather; but it is not known from what tribe, or family, he was descended, nor where he was born: but, that he was one of the captives who returned to Jerusalem, in consequence of the decree of Cyrus, is certain. As he began to prophesy in the eighth month of the second year of Darius, (called by historians Darius Hystaspes,) that is, about the year 520 before Christ, it is plain, that he lived at the same time with Haggai, and his authority was equally effectual in promoting the building of the temple. From chapter ii. verse 4, it appears, that he was called to the office of a prophet when he was a young man.

The prophecy of Zechariah consists of fourteen chapters, and may be divided into two parts.

The *first* part, to the end of chapter vi., contains the prophecies delivered in the *second* year of Darius king of Persia, and concerns the events which were then taking place, namely the restoration of the temple, interspersing prophecies relative to the advent of the Messiah.

The *second* part, the VIIth chapter, to the end, contains the prophecies delivered in the *fourth* year of the reign of Darius, relating to more distant events, particularly the coming of Jesus Christ, and the war of the Romans against the Jews.

Zechariah is the longest and most obscure of the twelve lesser prophets. His style, like that of Haggai, is, for the most part, like prose, though more obscure, towards the beginning, on account of his types and visions. Towards the end, he is more plain, as well as more lofty and poetical.

There are many passages of great interest; but the time will allow me to touch only upon a few of the most remarkable.

In the 1st chapter, the 8th, to the end of the 11th verse, the prophet gives an account of a vision of angels which he saw; and of the Lord of them, (that is Christ, the captain of the Lord's hosts,) like a warrior reposing himself under some myrtle trees in the heat of the day. The angels are represented as riding upon different coloured horses; the *red* might represent those who presided over countries that were the seat of *war*; the *white*, the guardians of those who were in *peace*; and the *speckled* those who were charged both with *judgment* and *mercy*, or that were concerned in more *various dispensations*. Though it is not easy to conjecture the precise

meaning of this vision, yet the general purport of it is sufficiently plain; the angels tell, that all the earth was *sitting still, and at rest*; the Persian empire and other nations connected with Judea, enjoying peace, at that time, though the Jews continued in an unsettled state*.

The *Branch* and *the Stone laid before Joshua*, in the III^d chapter, the 8th and 9th verses, relate to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In the IXth chapter, the 9th verse, is the prophecy referred to by Matt. xxi. 4, 5, and John xii. 14—16, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass:” or, as it should rather have been translated, “*even* upon a colt the foal of an ass †.”

In the XIth chapter, the 12th and 13th verses, is the passage to which St. Matthew alludes, xxvii. 7—10, respecting the buying the potter’s field, with the thirty pieces of silver, for which Judas sold Christ to the chief priests and pharisees. But St. Matthew attributes the prophecy to Jeremy, or Jeremiah. Different explanations have been given for this variation, or mistake. Of which I will mention *two*. The *one* is, that the Jews sometimes divided the Scriptures of the Old Testament into *three* classes, or parts. The *first*, beginning with *the Law*, was called THE LAW. The *second*, beginning with the *Psalms*, was called THE PSALMS; and the *third*, beginning with *Jeremiah*, was called JEREMIAH; so that the prophecy of *Zechariah*, and of the other prophets, being included in that division which

* Orton, Vol. VI. p. 451. Horne, Vol. II. p. 713.

† Horne, Vol. II. p. 385.

began with *Jeremiah*, all quotation from it would go under this prophet's name. The *second* is, that it is probable, that St. Matthew, here, as in other places, wrote only *the prophet*, and that some transcriber, without sufficient consideration, put in *Jeremy* *.

Chapter XII, verse 10., is the passage which is quoted by St. John, xix. 37., (and again, it may be said, Rev. i. 7.) as applicable to our Lord's crucifixion and wounding, "they shall look on me—or on him—whom they have pierced."

The XIIIth chapter, the 1st verse, it is said, "In that day," that is the day in which they, "look on him whom they have pierced," the day of Christ's crucifixion, "there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." This is that **FOUNTAIN** spoken of in the Hymn :

I.

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins ;
And sinners, plung'd beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

II.

The dying thief rejoiced to see
That Fountain in his day ;
O may I there, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

III.

Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransom'd Church of God
Be sav'd to sin no more.

* See Horne, Vol. II. p. 386, note.

IV.

E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

V.

But, when this lisp'ing stamm'ring tongue,
Lies silent in the grave,
Then, in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing thy power to save.

This is that Fountain, in which, if we wash, according to Isaiah, i. 18., "Though our sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." This is that Fountain, in which that "great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," mentioned in the Revelation, vii. 9, 14., who "stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and" with "palms in their hands," had bathed; for *they* had "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Chapter XIII. 7., is the passage quoted by St. Matthew, XXVI. 31., and St. Mark, XIV. 27. "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered," when our Lord was taken by the chief priests and Pharisees, and the disciples fled.

In the XIVth chapter, the destruction of the enemies, foretold at the beginning of this prophetic discourse, chapter XII. 1—9., is again foretold; and the prophecy concludes with announcing the final conversion of all nations to the Gospel, and the prosperity of the Church.

At the 20th verse, it is said, "In that day, shall

there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar: yea, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD OF HOSTS; and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein; and, in that day, there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts." In order to understand this, it must be remembered, that, upon the mitre, or cap, of the high priest, was a plate of gold, on which was engraven HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD, (Exodus xxviii. 36.) to shew the *holiness* of the high priest and his ministrations. But, in this last time of the Gospel, there is to be HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD even upon the *bells of the horses* and upon the *pots*; that is every thing, even the most common and trivial, shall be conducted in the most pure and holy way, in the fear and love of God; in the words of St. Paul, (1 Cor. x. 31.,) "Whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, we shall do *all* to THE GLORY of God."

Oh! for those days! Oh! that God may hasten his kingdom, cleanse us from all sin, and, on every thought, word, and deed, write HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.

MALACHI is the last of the prophets. His *name* signifies *my angel*, or *my messenger*, and so little is known of him, that it is doubtful, whether it be a proper name, or only signifies the angel of the Lord, a messenger, a prophet. He prophesied while Nehemiah was governor of Judea, more particularly after his second coming from the Persian court; and appears to have contributed the weight of his exhortations to the restoring of the Jewish government, and the final reform established by that pious

and excellent governor. He flourished about the year 436 before Christ. His book is written almost wholly in prose, but is not wanting in force and elegance.

The book of Malachi consists of four chapters, which contain two distinct discourses, or prophecies.

The *first* discourse is contained in the Ist and IId chapters. In this, he reminds the Jews of the special favours which God had bestowed upon them, and reproves them for not shewing due reverence to God, for their rejection is threatened, and the calling of the Gentiles is announced. The divine judgments are threatened both against the people, and the priests, for their disrespect to God in their sacrifices, and, also, for their unlawful marriages with idolaters, and divorcing even their lawful wives.

In the *second* discourse, in the IIId and IVth chapters, he foretells the coming of Christ and his harbinger John the Baptist, to purify the sons of Levi, the priests, and to smite the land with a curse unless they all repent: "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts." Reproofs are interspersed for withholding their tithes and other oblations; and, also, for their blasphemy; and the reward of the good, and the punishment of the wicked are foretold. The prophecy concludes with enjoining the strict observance of the law, till the forerunner, already promised, should appear in the spirit and power of Elijah, to introduce the Messiah, and begin a new and everlasting dispensation.

At the 1st verse of the IVth chapter, it is said,

“ the day cometh that shall burn asan oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” Let the proud and the wicked think of this. Whatever their wickedness is, God sees it all, and will burn it up root and branch. But unto those who “ fear his name, the Sun of Righteousness” hath arisen, “ with healing in his wings.” We have reason to be thankful every day for the beams of the *natural sun*; but we have greater reason to be thankful for the beams of THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, whose coming is “ as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds.” “ Through the tender mercy of God” this “ day-spring from on high hath visited” this benighted world; (Luke i. 78.) a world which “ sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.” (Matt. iv. 16. Luke i. 79.) Let us be thankful, that he hath risen on *Britain*. Gross darkness once spread over *us*; but *we* are now “ light in the Lord.” Let those be particularly thankful upon whose *souls* he hath risen with his healing, strengthening and comforting influences; if he hath, not only enlightened our eyes, but healed our moral diseases. Let us give thanks to the Father, “ who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son;” (Col. i. 13.) and be especially careful to “ walk in the light.” (John xii. 35. Eph. v. 8.) Let us, wisely and diligently, improve the advantages which we enjoy in consequence of the Redeemer’s appearance, and “ work the works of Him that sent us, while it is day.” (John ix. 4.) And let us earnestly desire those further supplies of light and life from Jesus Christ,

which may make us, in our lesser spheres, “shine as lights in the world,” to the honour of Him, whose beams we reflect, to the credit of our profession, and to the good of others.

Arise, O Sun of Righteousness, and shine on all the earth! Convert and heal every nation, that this dark world may become an emblem of those holy and happy regions, where thou, who art LIGHT, livest and reignest for ever! Amen.

SERMON XLV.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—PROVERBS I—III.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS—WISDOM—CONFEDERACIES IN SIN—
WISDOM—THE STRANGE WOMAN—TITHES AND OFFERINGS—
AFFLICTION—WISDOM.

PROVERBS i. 7.

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge : but fools
despise wisdom and instruction.*

THE book of PROVERBS has always been ascribed to SOLOMON, whose name it bears, though, from the frequent repetition of the same sentences, as well as from some variations in style which have been observed, doubts have been entertained whether he really was the author of *every* maxim it contains. Those in the XXXth chapter are expressly called “The words of *Agur* the son of *Jakeh* ;” and the XXXIst chapter is entitled “The words of king *Lemuel*.” It seems certain, that the collection called THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON was arranged in the order in which we now have it, by different hands : but it is not, therefore, to be concluded that they are not the productions of Solomon, who we are informed, 1 Kings iv. 32., composed no less than *three thousand* Proverbs. As it is nowhere said, that Solomon himself made a collection of Proverbs and sentences, the general opinion is, that *several* persons made a collection of them ; *Hezekiah*, among others,

is mentioned in the XXVth chapter; *Agur*, *Isaiah*, and *Ezra* might have done the same. The Jewish writers affirm, that Solomon wrote *The Canticles*, or *Song* bearing his name, in his *youth*, the *Proverbs* in his *riper years*, and *Ecclesiastes* in his *old age*.

The book of Proverbs is frequently quoted by the Apostles, who considered it as a treasure of revealed morality, from which Christians were to derive their rules of conduct; and the authority of no book of the Old Testament is so well confirmed, by the evidence of quotations, as that of the Proverbs.

A *Proverb* is a short single sentence, containing some useful, or moral, or religious truth, expressed with great force, or neatness, so as to strike, and make an impression, and be easily remembered for use, when it may be wanted. They are a mode of instruction used by almost all, or most, nations; especially the eastern; and of *them* the Israelites are most remarkable for theirs. It is a mode of instruction as pleasing as it is useful; and Solomon has, in one of his Proverbs, himself explained and set forth the principal advantages of them: he says, XXV. 11., “Apples of gold, in a network of silver, is a word seasonably spoken.” Thus, shewing, that grave and weighty thoughts should be set off by smooth and well-turned and ornamented words, as the appearance of the finest and most beautiful fruit, (or the *imitation* of it, perhaps, in the most precious materials,) is improved by the circumstance of its shining through a network, or basket, of silver beautifully carved. Bishop Hopkins, in his sermon on Prov. xiv. 9., and after him, Orton, in his Exposition, speaking of the book of Proverbs, says, “Other parts of Scripture are like a rich *mine*, where the *precious ore* runs along in one *continued vein*; but this book is like a

heap of *pearls*, which, though they are loose and unstrung, are not, therefore, the less valuable *."

Besides the word *Proverb*, this kind of short and full-meaning sentence is, likewise, called a *maxim*, or *saying*, a *saw*, and an *aphorism*, and we have many books of this kind in our own language, and some of them very good; the best, perhaps, is the *Maxims of Piety and Christianity*, by the excellent Bishop Wilson, of which there are several in this parish; but the book of the Proverbs of Solomon surpasses all. The object of his book is, to instruct men in the deepest mysteries of true wisdom and understanding; the height and perfection of which is, the true knowledge of God's will, and the sincere "fear of the Lord." To this end, the book is filled with the choicest short sentences, containing in themselves distinct doctrines, duties, and so forth, of piety towards God, of justice and good-will towards men, and of sobriety and temperance in ourselves; together with precepts for the right education of children, and for the relative situations of subjects, magistrates, and sovereigns.

In order to make a trial of the worth of this book, let a man of any thought and experience sit down, and read it attentively; and, as he goes on, let him say to himself, "Is this so? Have *I* conducted myself by these rules? When I made such and such a *mistake*, or *failure*, when I fell into such and such a *sin*, Did I act according to this precept? If I had studied this book, and acted accordingly, should I not have acted better for my advantage in this world, and should I not, through God's grace, have kept my soul from many sins, for which I must answer to

* Vol. V. p. 1., and Bray's Sermons selected from the most eminent divines, p. 257.

God, and for which I must suffer, unless I turn to God through Christ, and am saved by the atonement of his blood?" These considerations will, perhaps, induce him to make the book of Proverbs his constant study and *rule of life*.

The book of Proverbs may be divided into *five* parts:

The *first* part is contained in the first *nine* chapters, and is an *Introduction*, in which the teacher gives his *son*, or scholar, a series of admonitions, directions, cautions, and incitements to the study of *wisdom*. "This part," says Bishop Lowth, "is varied, elegant, sublime, and truly poetical: the order of the subject is, in general, excellently preserved, and the parts are very aptly connected. It is embellished with many beautiful descriptions and personifications," that is representations of virtues and qualities as if they were living *persons*; so as, here, Wisdom is spoken of:—Bishop Lowth continues, "the language is polished, and abounds with all the ornaments of poetry, so that it scarcely yields in elegance and splendour to any of the sacred writings."

The *second* part is contained in the Xth chapter, to the end of the 16th verse of the XXIIId chapter, and consists of what may be, strictly and properly, called *Proverbs*, namely, unconnected sentences, expressed with much neatness, and simplicity, and force.

The *third* part reaches from chapter XXII. verse 17, to the end of chapter XXIV. In this part, the teacher drops the *proverb* style, and addresses his scholar as if he was present, to whom he gives renewed and *connected* exhortations to the study of Wisdom.

The *fourth* part consists of Proverbs which are

supposed to have been selected from some larger collection of Solomon's Proverbs "by the men of *Hezekiah*,"—that is, by the prophets whom he employed to restore the service and writings of the Jewish church, as mentioned 2 Chron. xxxi. 20, 21.

This part, like the second, consists of unconnected sentences, and extends, from chapter xxv., to chapter xxix., both included. Some of the Proverbs which Solomon had introduced into the former part of the book are here repeated.

Part the *fifth* consists of chapters xxx. and xxxi. In the xxxth are included the wise observations and instructions delivered by *Agur*, the son of Jakeh, to his scholars Ithiel and Ucal. The xxxist chapter contains the precepts which were given to *Lemuel* by his mother, who is supposed, by some, to have been a Jewish woman married to some neighbouring prince, and who appears to have been most desirous to guard him against vice, to establish him in the principles of justice, and to unite him to a wife of the best qualities. Of *Agur* we know nothing; nor have any of the commentators offered a probable conjecture respecting him.

The Proverbs of Solomon afford a noble specimen of the instructive poetry of the Hebrews. But much of the elegance, point, and force which is found in them, is owing to an *opposition* between one part and another, both in the words and sentiments. A careful attention to this will remove much of that obscurity, or difficulty, in which some of the Proverbs appear. Sometimes, also, one member, or part, of a Proverb must be supplied from the other; that is, sometimes one thing is expressed in one part of the sentence, and another in the other, and yet, both things are to be understood in both parts.

Thus, in Prov. x. 14, we read “Wise men lay up knowledge; but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction.” The meaning of which is, that wise men impart, for the benefit of others, the wisdom they have obtained and preserved; while fools, having little, or none, of that knowledge, soon exhaust their small stock, and speak, not only useless, but even hurtful, things.

Again, Prov. x. 1, “A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.” *Both* the father and mother are to be understood in both parts of this sentence, although, in the first, the father only is mentioned, and, in the second, only the mother.

It is, also, to be observed, that many things which are spoken generally are to be restrained to particular persons and circumstances *. For want of attending to this, many moral truths have been pushed to an extent, which causes them altogether to fail of the effect they were designed to produce.

We may explain this by the often-repeated counsels of Solomon respecting one man becoming *surety*, what we should call becoming *bondman*, or *bail*, for another, Prov. vi. 1, 2. xi. 15, xvii. 18, and xx. 16. In these passages he does not condemn *suretyship* altogether; as, in some cases, it is, not only lawful, but even an act of justice, prudence and charity; but he forbids his scholar to become surety *rashly*, without considering *for whom*, or *how far*, he binds himself, or how he could discharge the debt, if occasion should require it.

When Solomon says, Prov. xv. 1, that “A soft answer turneth away wrath,” the best *method* of

* Horne, Vol. IV. p. 127.

softening anger is pointed out, although the obstinacy, or wickedness, of man may produce quite a different effect.

In like manner, when St. Peter says, 1 Ep. iii. 15, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" this expression is not to be understood as meaning, that good men will *never* be ill-treated: but it shews *the most probable effect* that a virtuous life will produce.

Once more, Prov. xxii. 6, Solomon says, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and, when he is old, he will not depart from it." Here the wise king speaks, not of what *always* takes place, but what is the most *probable*, and frequent *consequence* of a good *education* *.

More instances might be given; but these, I think, are sufficient. We will proceed, then, to consider the chapters in their turn. The 1st chapter was the first lesson at evening service on Sunday last; the II^d and III^d chapters are the first lessons this day.

The 1st verse of the 1st chapter gives the title of the book, "The *Proverbs* of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel." It then sets forth what is the *nature*, or *intent*, of Proverbs, "To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;" that is, to make men know when good advice is given, and how to give it to others; or to teach them to avoid errors, and to correct those they have fallen into; "To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;" that is, to make men good in every circumstance, condition, and relation in life; "To give subtilty," that

* Horne, Vol. II. p. 754, 759.

is quickness, or penetration, “to the simple,” that is to the uninstructed, or inexperienced, “to the young man knowledge and discretion.” But they are not intended for *them* alone, there is *that* in them, which may improve the wisest. “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a Proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings;” to understand the meaning of parables, figures, and other ways of instruction.

He, then, proceeds to state what is the sum and substance of all wisdom, of all knowledge, and of all conduct, “*The fear of the Lord* is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” By *wisdom*, he does *not* mean *common sagacity, carnal policy, or great learning*, but *true religion*; and, by *fools* here, are *not* meant those who want common sense, but who are thoughtless, wicked, and oppose themselves to all true religion and piety. He goes on, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck;” as valuable as the most costly, graceful and honourable ornaments that can be worn.

He, then, proceeds, at the 10th verse, to give a most important warning, or piece of advice, suited to that particular time and country, “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with *us*, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: let us swallow them up alive, as the grave; and whole, as those that go down to the pit;” that is, there is no more danger of a discovery, than if they were swallowed

up at once by an earthquake: "we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: my son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: for their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. Surely in vain the net is spread in the *sight* of any bird;" but wicked men are more foolish, they *see* their danger, and yet *run into it*. "And they lay wait for *their own blood*; they lurk privily for *their own lives*;" the vengeance of the laws, or of God, will overtake them. "So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof," the owner's life to get it from him, or, rather, his own life, when he has got possession of it, and thinks himself secure.

It seems, that, in the days of Solomon, it was not unusual for men to form themselves into companies, or *gangs*, of robbers, and entice others to join them, under the pretence that they should all *live well*, and "have one purse," or share the plunder equally. This led to *murder*. And what was the consequence? It was laying "wait for *their own blood*," it was lurking "privily for *their own lives*." Their robberies and murders led, of course and necessarily, to discovery, sooner or later, and *their own lives* were forfeited.

And, alas! what was the case in Solomon's days, is so *now*. His warning is as much wanting in *these days*, as it was then, perhaps *more so*. Of what confederacies and *gangs* do the newspapers daily tell us! How horrible, within a few years, was the case of *Weare*, and *Thurtell* and *Probert*,—gamesters, robbers, murderers! And what was the end of them? The gamester,—the open robber,—was robbed

and murdered by one of his own companions whom he had plundered: the murderer was hanged on the evidence of one of the accomplices; and *he*, instead of repenting, went on in sin, and soon paid his life for a fresh offence.

But such things are not confined to the great city, and persons of some consequence; such confederacies and *gangs* are formed even in *villages*, and *the end of them is the same*. One of these was formed in a neighbouring village not long ago. And, have they gained the riches and the happiness they expected? No. They are dispersed in the fear of their forfeited lives, and some are sent out of the country, far away from their homes and their kindred. The beginning of this is *idleness* and *covetousness*. And the beginning is, too often, in what is termed *poaching*. The *lazy* and the *covetous* think it easier and better to run the chance of snaring a hare than to do a day's work, or they add it to their day's work. They get over their pot, and sing "a shining night is my delight,"—they say, "come with us"—"let us lurk privily"—"we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil"—"cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse." But it is a confederacy of wickedness and sin, which gets on, from bad, to worse, and will, most assuredly, end in *ruin, misery* and *death*,—DEATH *here* and *HEREAFTER*.

I wish I could say, that our *laws* are *not* to blame in the inducements which they make to poaching. Alas! how many *lives*—how many *SOULS*—have been lost in preserving hares and partridges. It seems, at length, to be *felt*, that our *Game Laws* are at once defective and severe, and the occasions of many and great crimes. They have occupied the attention of

Parliament for the last two sessions, though nothing towards their amendment has, as yet, been done. As a lover of my country, and of mankind, I must say, that I wish, with all my *heart*, they were altered, or abolished; but, while they are in force, it is our *duty*, as *good subjects*, to observe them.

It was said, at but our last parish meeting, that there is scarcely a boy of any size in the next parish—and, I fear, it must be extended in some measure to the boys of this—but he is a *snarer*. If so, it may be said, without any pretension to prophecy, that, unless they forsake their evil ways, there is not a boy of any size, in the next parish, but will, in less than ten years, be transported, or hanged.

“My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us,”—“My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: for”—“they lay wait for *their own blood*; they lurk privily for *their own lives*.”

At the 20th verse, *Wisdom*, who is represented as a *person*, is described as uttering “her voice in the streets;” that is, by conscience, and providence, by the prophets, and by the Scriptures; but without being regarded; for which, destruction, and distress, and anguish, are denounced upon those who would not listen to her, “For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple,” from the paths of piety, “shall slay *them*, and the” ease, or “prosperity of fools shall destroy *them*. But whoso hearkeneth unto *me*,” that is *Wisdom*, or *Religion*, “shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”

In the IId chapter, Solomon, to encourage his scholar to hearken to his advice, shews him, that wisdom may be obtained; represents the value and benefits of it, as what would secure the blessing and guidance of God, and preserve him from the snares of “the evil man, from the man that speaketh forward things;” that would instil bad principles into him, both of morals and of religion. But he, not only warns him against the bad *man*, but also against the bad *woman*; called here, verse 16., “the *strange woman*;” for, as the Jewish law inflicted heavy punishments on those who committed fornication and adultery, it is probable, that the Jews had harlots among them from the neighbouring nations, which seduced them to impurity and idolatry; and might be tolerated in some corrupt times of their state. Hence, the name, *strange woman*, came to be applied to all *bad women*, whether foreigners or Israelites.

Man and *woman* were, undoubtedly, made for each other by the Great Creator of all; but they are to come together only in that way which God has appointed, which is by the union of one man with one woman, in *honourable marriage*; a union formed for the lives of the parties, and not to be violated on any account whatever. And, if we will fairly and fully weigh the state of the case, this is the order of things which is really most for the happiness of mankind; and those who act contrary to it sin against God, and are certain to bring unhappiness upon themselves. Solomon, in this place,—the IId chapter, the 16th verse to the end, and the whole of the Vth chapter, the VIth chapter, 24th verse to the end, and the VIIth chapter, the 5th verse, to the end of that,—sets forth, in forcible and awakening lan-

guage, the sin and misery of unlawful connections : he says of “ the strange woman,” or prostitute, “ her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.” (II. 18.) And, again, “ Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.” (VII. 27.)

In the III^d chapter, Solomon goes on to recommend the study of wisdom, by the many benefits it brings ; and cautions us against those things which are inconsistent with it. Each verse is worthy of particular notice, but we must touch briefly on but a few. At the 5th verse, he says, “ Trust in the Lord with all thine heart ; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge *Him*, and He shall direct thy paths.”

At the 9th verse, he says, “ Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase.” I have before spoken at large upon the subject of *first fruits*, *tithes* and *offerings*. Here Solomon urges the faithful payment of them, and the applying a part of our substance to the “ honour” of “ the Lord,” as a matter of blessing and interest to the offerer, “ So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”

At the 11th verse, he sets forth the true end and benefits of *affliction*, “ My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord ; neither be weary of his correction. For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.” St. Paul quotes this, in the xith chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, verse 5—7., and calls it “ an exhortation that speaketh unto *us* as unto children.” This is an important hint, namely, that all these exhortations speak to *us*, as well as to those for whose imme-

diate use Solomon wrote them. May *we not* despise the chastening of the Lord, nor think lightly of it, or that it is not sent with a good design, and capable of being very useful. Nor must we “be weary of it,” or, as the apostle says, “faint under it,” though it may be long continued. Though it should grow heavier and heavier, we ought not to murmur, nor take unlawful methods to remove it : we should not think it more than we need, or that it is continued longer than is for our good. All proceeds from *love* ; it is *not* the *sword* of an *enemy*, but the *rod* of a *father* ; that is, a token of his *love*, and a means of his children’s happiness*.” The passage from the xiith chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 6—10., is quoted in the *Exhortation* prepared by the Church, in the service for *The Visitation of the Sick*, and is, both instructive, and consoling, under all cases of affliction and sickness.

At the 13th verse of the iiid chapter of Proverbs, Solomon begins a beautiful and animated description of heavenly *wisdom*, or *true religion*, “Happy is the man that findeth *wisdom*, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies ; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand ; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her : and happy is every one that retaineth her.”

But, however lovely and beneficial was *Wisdom* as

* Orton, Vol. V. p. 12.

thus declared by Solomon, under *the Law*, the WISDOM revealed to *us*, in the GOSPEL, is far more transcendent. There we learn, that CHRIST is “the Power of God and THE WISDOM OF GOD:” (1 Cor. i. 24.) and that he “is made unto *us* WISDOM, and RIGHTEOUSNESS, and SANCTIFICATION, and REDEMPTION.” (verse 30.) Of HIM it may, indeed, be said, in a far more exalted sense, “Happy is the man that findeth WISDOM! His merchandise is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain of Him than fine gold. He is more precious than rubies, and all that thou canst desire is not to be compared unto him. Length of days is in His right hand, and in His left hand riches and honour. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace.” HE is “THE TREE OF LIFE,” whose “leaves” are “for the healing of the nations,” (Rev. xxii. 2., ii. 7.)—“to them that lay hold upon Him: and happy is every one that retaineth Him.”

SERMON XLVI.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—PROVERBS IV—XII.

WISDOM—KEEPING THE HEART—THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD
—THE ANT AN EXAMPLE—THE SEVEN ABOMINATIONS—WIS-
DOM—REPROOF—THE MOUTH OF THE RIGHTEOUS—CHARITY
COVERETH SIN—THE FALSE BALANCE—THE LIBERAL SOUL—
HUMANITY TO ANIMALS—LYING LIPS AN ABOMINATION—
THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

PROVERBS xii. 28.

*In the way of Righteousness is Life ; and in the pathway thereof
there is no death.*

IN my last discourse, we considered the general nature and contents of the book of Proverbs, and entered, more particularly, upon the first three chapters. The first lessons for this day are the XIth and the XIIth chapters ; we will, therefore, begin, now, with the IVth, and go on to the end of the XIIth, the last verse of which I have made my text.

In the IVth chapter Solomon continues his exhortations to all, especially to young people, whom he addresses with the tender concern of a *father*.

“Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine,” not a trifling, indifferent matter, but what is absolutely necessary for your peace and happiness, “forsake ye not my law.” To recommend

these instructions, he relates, that they were such as he received from his pious father, David: "For I was my father's son, tender and only-beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me, also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments and live. Get *wisdom*, get *understanding*," that is, labour, traffic for it, seek it as diligently as men do the wealth and honours of this world. It was, perhaps, this pious, tender and earnest exhortation of his parents, which made Solomon to seek for *wisdom*; and, when God offered him his choice of *what* he would have, that he preferred "an understanding heart to judge *God's* people," (1 Kings iii. 9.) rather than long life for himself, or riches, or conquest over his enemies; for no one but who was already *wise* to a certain degree would have made *such* a choice. Solomon's father proceeds, "forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee," as thy surest, strongest guard. He, then, goes on to state the virtues of *Wisdom*, and the advantages of possessing her, "*Wisdom* is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and, with all thy getting, get understanding. Exalt *her*, and she shall promote *thee*: she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thy head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee."

From the 14th, to the end of the 19th verse, Solomon, in his own person, exhorts, "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men:" and sets forth the evil of following them, and the advantages of walking in "the paths of the just."

At the 20th verse, he, again, calls for attention to

his words ; and, at the 23d verse, says, “ Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” This is a figure taken from, or an allusion to, what sometimes takes place in *war*. An enemy has sometimes *poisoned* the wells and springs of water which lay in the course of the army coming against them, by which numbers of those who drank of them were killed ; so that, afterwards, when an army was on their march, it was customary to send on a detachment of soldiers to take possession of the wells and springs, and to guard them “ with all diligence.” And, thus, as the *heart* is the spring of all *thought* and *action*, and these will be good, or bad, as the *heart* is, he exhorts men to “ keep” it, to guard it, with all force and diligence, that no one should poison it, as “ out of it are the issues of life,” those streams, which are, either the cause of health and *life*, or misery and death.

In the Vth chapter Solomon repeats his cautions to young people, and particularly warns them against *uncleanness*. From the 1st, to the end of the 14th verse, he warns them against “ the strange woman,” or harlot, on which I spoke particularly in my last ; and, the 15th verse, to the end, he sets forth the happiness of virtuous and conscientious *marriage*. At the 21st verse, he says, “ For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.” And he says, again, afterwards, XV. 3., “ The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” There is not a more awful consideration than what are called the *omnipresence* and the *omniscience* of God, or God’s being present in all places at all times, and seeing every thing that we do, and even our most secret thoughts,—nor is there any circumstance that more strongly shews

the corruption of man's heart, its hardness and unbelief, than the manner in which we treat this. When the *eye* of *man* is upon the sinner, he will, in many cases, refrain from sin ; he will not commit murder, nor adultery, nor will he steal,—before a superior, or a female, a man will not swear, nor talk indecently ; and, yet, before the great God of heaven and earth, who made us, who formed the eye and the tongue of man, who is present every where, and sees every action, and knows our inmost thoughts, and has said that he will punish sin with everlasting torment, we do these things. I have read of a pious person, who had written up in his room, in large letters, GOD SEES AND HEARS, that the words and the thought might ever be before his eyes and in his heart. “ The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.”—“ The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” If this consideration is a matter of *fear* to the *wicked*, it is no less a matter of *consolation* to the *good*, for he has this to cheer him amidst all the evils of the world, that, however his words and actions may be misapprehended, or misrepresented, still God sees his *heart* and his *motives*, and will, in his own good time, vindicate, and reward them ; as David says, Psalm xxxvii. 5, 6, “ Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall make thy righteousness as clear as the light ; and thy just dealing as the noon-day.”

O God, make *us* ever sensible of thy presence, ever careful not to offend thee,—and *that* from LOVE more than from *fear*.

The VIth chapter, the 1st to the end of the 5th verse, treats of *suretyship*, on which subject I spoke in my last. What is here said may be illustrated by

comparing it with xi. 15., “He that is surety for a *stranger* shall smart for it;” he does not know his circumstances, and therefore he is in danger; “and he that hateth suretyship is sure;” it is most prudent to avoid it; but, yet, there may be cases, where prudence, justice and charity, may call for, and sanction it.

At the 6th verse, Solomon calls upon the sluggard to “go to the ant,”—to “consider her ways, and be wise: which, having no guide” to direct her, “overseer” to make laws, “or ruler” to punish idleness, “provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest,” and lays it up secure against winter. But the *sluggard* is not the only one to whom this advice is most salutary; the *spendthrift*, in the winter of adversity, or of old age, has equally to blame his want of forecast, and to exclaim, “The harvest is past, the summer is ended,” (Jerem. viii. 20.) and we are destitute. How many are there, who receive a scanty and dishonourable subsistence from a parish, who, if they had been industrious and frugal in their youth, might have had a comfortable and honourable maintenance in the decline of life. Considered in this light, how much to be respected are those, who, becoming members of *Friendly Societies*, lay up their money in store against the time of sickness and old age: and, an additional inducement has been held out to the lower classes, of late years, in the *security* and *advantages* for preserving their *savings*, in the *Provident Banks*.

At the 12th, to the end of the 16th verse, the “naughty person,” the “wicked man,” is exposed, “who walketh with a froward mouth.” He maintains himself by lies, flattery and slander. “He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he

teacheth with his fingers;" he has private signs to instruct his accomplices how they are to play their part; "Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord" in families and nations, hoping to find his account in it. But what is the end of it? "Therefore shall *his* calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy."

The 16th, to the end of the 19th verse, are mentioned "six things" which "the Lord doth hate: yea, seven" which "are an abomination to him: A proud look,—a lying tongue,—and hands that shed innocent blood,—An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations," to gratify his appetites, his covetousness, or revenge,—"feet that be swift in running to mischief,—a false witness" in judgment "that speaketh lies," that is that perjures himself,—"and him that soweth discord among brethren."

Verse 20, to the end, is another warning against "the strange woman" and "the adultress."

And this is renewed again, in the VIIth chapter. At the 22d verse of which he says of the "young man void of understanding," (verse 7.) "He goeth after her straightway as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."

On which it may be observed, that the words, rendered here "as a *fool* to the correction of the *stocks*," a learned commentator would render "as a *deer* skippeth into the *toil*," which the huntsman setteth to entrap him; which makes a beautiful gradation, or progress, in the motion of the three animals here mentioned, the *ox*, the *deer*, and the *bird*; each goes swifter than the other, and, so, it

represents the *increasing speed* with which the young sinner is hurried on to his ruin, till he feels himself mortally wounded, and it is too late to go back *.

In the VIIIth chapter Wisdom is again introduced, and there is an evident contrast, or opposition, to the allurements of the harlot mentioned in the former chapter. At the 22d verse, to the end, what is said of *wisdom* is applied, by many writers, to CHRIST: “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth; and my delights were with the sons of men. Now, therefore, hearken unto me, my children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth *me*, findeth *life*, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that

* Orton, Vol. V. p. 24.

sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that *hate me love death.*"

Other commentators, however, do *not* think that Solomon, when he wrote it, intended it of CHRIST. It may, at any rate, be applied to him in the way of *accommodation*; and, as to Solomon's speaking it as prophetic, or typical of Christ, it should be recollected, that, ere this, David had written his Psalms, and Solomon his Song, in which are passages, which the writers must have known could *not* be applied to themselves, but must be applied to a GREATER ONE, the expected MESSIAH, the anxious DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.

The IXth chapter, contains a description of Wisdom and Folly, as persons sending their invitations to mankind; and the different reception of their guests. These seem to be separate pieces, which Solomon might write, and give to the young people about his court, to instruct them in the same thing, by a variety of language and images, according to the manners of the eastern nations. He here describes wisdom as a princess, making a splendid entertainment for her guests.

At the 8th verse, he says "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning." To the same effect, he says, xii. 1, "Whoso loveth instruction," that is loveth to be taught, "loveth knowledge;" is in the way to be wise and good: "but he that hateth reproof is brutish;" wants sense as well as grace. If this be so,—and, so, undoubtedly, it is,—what are we to say of those, in this age, who will neither bear reproof, nor instruction? Of children who will not bear to

be spoken to by their parents, servants by their masters, and inferiors by their superiors? They are void of sense, they are brutish, they are enemies to themselves, and rebels to their parents, their masters, their superiors, and to God, who orders every one to be obedient, humble and willing to learn, and to bear instruction and reproof.

In my last discourse, I stated that *the Book of Proverbs* might be divided into *five* parts: That the *first* part is contained in the first *nine* chapters, and is an *Introduction*, in which the teacher gives his son, or scholar, a series of admonitions, directions, cautions, and incitements to the study of *Wisdom*. This we have now gone through, as far as our time would allow. The *second* part is contained from the beginning of the Xth chapter, to the end of the 16th verse of the XXIId chapter, and consists of what may, strictly and properly, be called *Proverbs*, namely short unconnected sentences, expressed with much neatness, and simplicity and force. This is that part upon which we are, now, about to enter, and from which all the remainder of our Sunday lessons in Proverbs are taken. The *third* part reaches, from chapter xxii. 17, to the end of chapter xxv.: in which the teacher drops the *proverb* style, and addresses his scholar as if he was present, and to whom he gives renewed and connected exhortations on the study of *Wisdom*. The *fourth* part is contained in the XXVth, to the end of the XXIXth chapter, and consists of *Proverbs* which are supposed to have been selected from some larger collection of Solomon's Proverbs by persons employed by Hezekiah. The *fifth* part, contained in the XXXth and XXXIst chapters, consists of the instructions of *Agur*, and the advice given to *Lemuel* by his mother.

We will go on, then, to the *Proverbs* of the Xth chapter, where every verse might make the text of a separate discourse; but I must only touch on those points which seem to be of most importance, or which require some little explanation.

At the 10th verse it is said, “He that winketh with his eye causeth sorrow:” that is, he who gives *signs* to his accomplices to do a man mischief, while he is speaking him fair, “causeth him sorrow: *but*”—or rather *and* “a prating fool shall fall.”

Verse 11. “The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life,” that is, wholesome instructive words spring up as naturally in a good man, as pure water in a well, refreshing and strengthening all about him: “but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.” We have, again, at verses 20 and 21, and 31 and 32, further directions respecting the government of the tongue, which shew the importance of it, and how carefully it should be attended to.

Verse 12, it is said “*Hatred* stirreth up strifes;” that is, malicious, ill-natured people, by slander and tale-bearing, raise disturbances, and make people quarrel about trifles: “but *love* covereth all sins,” that is, overlooks and conceals, or excuses, and makes the best of them. This verse will illustrate that one of St. Peter, 1 Ep. iv. 8, which is so often, and so fatally, mis-understood, “Above all things have fervent *charity* among yourselves: for *charity* shall cover the multitude of sins.” Many persons understand by this, that *charity*, or giving *alms* to the poor, will cover a multitude of *their own sins* in the sight of God: whereas, it is evident, both in itself, and from this proverb of Solomon, that, it is *love* of our neighbour, which will cover, or excuse, or look upon with compassion, and endeavour to

get him to forsake, *his* sins, though they should be *many*.

Again, verse 16, “the labour of the righteous tendeth to life;” that is wisdom and goodness make a man’s life a blessing to himself and others: “the fruit of the wicked to sin:” wicked men abuse it, make it an occasion of sin and ruin, and turn it into a curse.

In the XIth chapter, the first lesson at this morning service, it is said “A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight.” The selling by false balances, and short weights and measures, is peculiarly abominable in the sight of God, as it is *defrauding* under a *pretence* of doing *right*. Many are the texts of Scripture on this head, (see Prov. xvi. 11. xx. 10, 23. Micah vi. 11. Hosea xii. 7.) and it was a part of God’s express law to the Israelites,—Levit. xix. 35, 36. Deut. xxv. 15.—“Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just *ephah*, and a just *hin* shall ye have.” The defrauding by false balances, weights, and measures, is an abomination, against whomsoever it may be practised; but, when it is done against *the poor*, it is then exceedingly abominable. The prophet Amos,—viii. 4—8.—cries out, in appalling language, against those, in his time, who were guilty of this mean and detestable sin, “Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new moon,” that is the feast of the new moon, “be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the *ephah* small, and the *shekel* great,” that is making the *measure* by which they *sold* small, and the *weight* by which they weighed the *money*

given by the *buyer* great, “and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes:” that is, sell the needy for slaves, if they owe but for a pair of shoes, or sandals, and cannot pay for them: “yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat? The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.” And this sin of unjust traffic was become so common in the land, that he says, “Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast down and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt,” that is, by the overflowing of the river Nile.

At the 3d verse, it is said, “The integrity of the upright shall guide *them*: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.” If a man comes to a resolution to preserve strict integrity, that will direct him, and make his way plain; it is easy to determine what is fair and honourable. But, when the question is, What mean, dishonourable things may be done without discovery? a scene is opened for perplexity, and men of great subtlety and refinement are often entangled, exposed and ruined.

At verse 24, it is said, “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.” This is true, both as it concerns our worldly affairs, and, more so, as it concerns our spiritual. *Liberality* (which must ever be carefully distinguished from *profusion*) is its own reward; and he who shall prudently lay out his money in doing good to his fellow-creatures and promoting the glory of God, will undoubtedly meet with

a return, either in this world, or the next. *Heaven* is a *store-chamber* which cannot be broken open and robbed, it is a *bank* which will *never break*. In pointing out to you, therefore, ways by which *you*—not only the *rich*, but the *poor*, also, in a *degree*—can at once contribute to the good of your necessitous brethren, and the promoting the cause of God in the world,—we conceive that we are doing *you* a *kindness*, and that we are deserving of your *kind regard* and *thanks*.

At the 30th verse, it is said, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.” That is, the fruits which a good man brings forth, will contribute to the nourishment and health and life of those who partake of them. “And he that winneth souls,” that is to God and godliness, “is wise,” though his *method* may not be so judicious as that of others. To such, also, a high reward is promised in the resurrection, as we read in the prophet Daniel,—xii. 3.,—“they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.”

In the XIIth chapter, at the 4th verse, mention is made, both of the “virtuous woman,” and of her “that maketh ashamed;” but, as I shall have occasion to speak of both, in my Sermon for the twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity, I shall say nothing respecting them now.

At the 9th verse, it is said, “He that is despised,” or overlooked, “and hath a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.” But, we are told, it should rather have been translated, “Better is he that lives meanly, and is servant to himself, than he who appears in a great deal of grandeur, and has not wherewith to support it.” This

is a too-common case; many who make a great figure in the world, would not have bread to eat, if their debts were paid. It is prudent to set out in life plainly, and to regulate our expenses by our means *.

At the 10th verse, it is said, "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast," that is, he will take care that it be not used cruelly; but be moderately worked, and have proper food and rest, as a creature with feeling, and as one of the creation of God, who gives us them for our use: "but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel;" they have lost the natural compassion of men, and delight in cruelty; even their care and attention to animals is to preserve them to cruel purposes. But, as I have written at large upon "The Case of the Animal Creation, and the Duties of Man to them;" in Three Discourses, which I have preached more than once, and printed, I shall not enlarge upon the subject now.

At the 22d verse, it is said, "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight." There is, perhaps, no sin more common than *lying*; indeed, how *rare*, how *very rare*, is *truth*. And, yet, what is of more consequence to the welfare and happiness of mankind, than a strict adherence to *truth*? What is the consequence of *lying*, by children and servants, in families? of men, in their dealings with one another? of rulers and subjects? All in this world is doubt and distrust, deceiving and deceived; and cheating, and loss, and misery are the consequence. What a different place would this world be, if every one, at all times, SPOKE TRUTH!! St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephe-

* Orton, Vol. V. p. 40.

sians,—iv. 17—25.,—speaking of the Gentiles, who “walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness:” adds, “But *ye* have not so learned CHRIST; if so be that *ye* have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that *ye* put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that *ye* put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore, putting away *lying*, speak every man *truth* with his neighbour: for *ye* are members one of another.”

The chapter concludes with the words of my text, “The way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death.”

This is true, in its full and saving sense, only of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. “*Our* righteousnesses,” brought before an all-seeing and pure God, “are as filthy rags.” (Isaiah lxiv. 6.) But brought *in Him* who is “the Lord our righteousness,” (Jer. xxiii. 6.) and who “is made unto us WISDOM, and RIGHTEOUSNESS, and SANCTIFICATION, and REDEMPTION:” (1 Cor. i. 30.) then, indeed, “there is no death,” for *the sting* of even death in this world is drawn; and, in the next, CHRIST is, truly and solely, LIFE.

SERMON XLVII.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—PROV. XIII, XIV.

RICHES AND POVERTY—THE CHOICE OF COMPANIONS—GOOD BOOKS—THE ROD—MOCK AT SIN—BITTERNESS OF THE HEART—THE WAY WHICH SEEMETH RIGHT—LAUGHTER—THE SIMPLE—THE DECEITFUL WITNESS—RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION—THE HOPE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

PROVERBS XIV. 32.

The wicked is driven away in his wickedness ; but the righteous hath hope in his death.

WE, on Sunday last, pursued our considerations on the book of Proverbs to the end of the XIIth chapter. The first lessons for this day are the XIIIth and XIVth chapters, so that our meditations now will be confined to these two chapters.

The first six verses contain some excellent maxims, like those we have had before, respecting *instruction*, the *government of the tongue*, *industry*, *lying*, and *righteousness*.

The 7th verse, it is said, “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing : there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.” There are few subjects upon which people make greater mistakes, than upon that of *riches* and *poverty*. There is something in the word *riches*, which excites desire and envy ; and something in the word *poverty*, which excites sometimes *pity*, but much oftener *contempt*.

We see a person nominally possessed of a great deal of land, or money, living in what is called *a great style*, making a great shew and talk in the world, and short-sighted people suppose he must be *happy*. But, perhaps, it is quite the contrary. At the *best*, the more are his *riches*, the more are his *cares*, and the more he has to answer for to God: and, perhaps, all this appearance is but outside shew, which covers an aching heart. *Riches* and *poverty* are what are called *relative terms*; that is, they must be considered in *relation to*, or in *comparison with*, something else. Thus, a man is not really *rich*, because he has so much money coming in every year; but according as his expenses, or outgoings, are *proportioned* to it. A man who has two thousand a year, and his expenses are three, is poor, compared with him whose income is but five hundred, and his expenses below that sum; and the labourer, who earns his nine, or ten, shillings a week, and can maintain his family, and is not in debt, is, really and truly, a *richer* and a *happier* man, than he whose income is thousands, but who is, all *that*, and more, in debt. He, who is *called* the *rich* man, is, often, as much distressed for an hundred pounds, or a guinea, as he who is called *poor* is for a shilling, or a sixpence.

I recollect, in a conversation I had with a person, who complained of the *hard times* and his *large family*, and who mentioned *one* whom he thought could have *no wants* and *no cares*, that I represented to him, that, in all probability, *he himself* was really both *richer* and *happier*. It has proved so. I went farther, and shewed him what cause *he* had for *content*, and happiness, and thankfulness to God; and asked him, If he knew *any one person* in the world,

with whom he would *change* situations? He might wish, indeed, for *this*, or *that*, man's estate, or his honours, or his happy disposition, or his goodness, or his piety; but would he *change* with him *in every respect*? We each agreed there was *no one*. Would any one of *you* change with *any other*, in *all respects*? What a proof is this of the goodness and bounty of God, in having thus dispensed his benefits and blessings to mankind, that, discontented as we are, no one would change with another. What we have to wish and *pray for* is,—not for riches, or power, or fame, but—for *contentment*, and for GRACE to use God's bounties—and we *all* of us have them—to our own real advantage, and to his honour and glory.

At the 10th verse, it is said, “Only by *pride* cometh contention;” *that* is the chief cause of quarrels in kingdoms, churches, societies, families, and between individuals, and of the continuance of them: “but with the well-advised is wisdom;” *they* act with prudence, and study and yield peace.

At the 11th verse, it is said, “Wealth gotten by vanity,” that is by cheating, lying, gaming, or any other wicked way, “shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour,” that is, by honest industry, “shall increase;” it will wear well. And, so, again, verse 22., it is said, “A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children,” by prudence, diligence, justice and charity: “and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just;” it is, frequently, by the providence of God, transferred to pious families, who will make a good use of it.

At the 20th verse, it is said, “He that walketh with wise men,” that is, intimately converses and forms friendships with them, “shall be wise;” conversation with such edifies, and makes a man to

become like to those with whom he converses : “ but a companion of fools,” that is of silly, ignorant, wicked persons, “ shall be destroyed.” Every one must, at the first hearing of this proverb, allow it to be an excellent rule of society, in every stage and condition of life. The manners of men are not formed so much by nature, as by society, and conversation, and habit. Our nature, indeed, our constitution, is the soil which produces virtue, or vice. Our constitution of body, and the inclinations of the mind, are what we commonly inherit from our parents ; and, yet, the force of education is often seen in this, that those who most resemble their parents in their countenance and dispositions, are, by conversation and custom, drawn into very different ways of thinking and habits of life. In short, the people with whom we most converse make the deepest impression of their words and actions upon our minds, and do, in a great measure, infuse their own wills, opinions, and affections into us. For which reason, it very much concerns, both our future, and present, happiness, that a good choice of persons shall be made, who shall be admitted to a near and intimate society with us, especially in the growing years and ascent of life.

Now, to *walk* with wise men, is to converse with them, and give attention to their instructions, whether living, or dead. But, how can we converse with the *dead*? even by their *examples* and *conversations*, which they have left behind them, in *books* written by themselves or others. And this makes this *proverb*,—“ He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed,”—a very practical rule ; for it would sometimes be difficult for the younger sort, in

some places, to meet with a proper guide, whose quality, age, or employment, could admit them to have free access to him upon all occasions. But, by the help of good *books* of an easy purchase, the meanest of us, who has least acquaintance in the world; and, if he had more, wants proper times and seasons to cultivate it, may, at his own leisure hours, retire, and converse with the very wisest, and best, and greatest men that ever lived upon the earth. By the help of the sacred Scriptures, we can be familiarly acquainted, not only with Solomon, the author of these proverbs, but, also, with “Moses and the prophets,” (Luke xvi. 29.) with Christ and his apostles, who, being all departed out of this life, yet continue to “speak to us” by their written sermons and discourses, as plainly as,—and, in some respects, plainer than,—they did to the people of their own times. So that there is no necessary maxim of faith, or morals, which they ever uttered, but we have the benefit of it by this way of conveyance; and, if we do but apply our hearts to the learning of them, and regulate our lives by them, we may very truly be said to *walk* with all these wise men*.

I have more than once endeavoured to impress upon your minds the great advantages and blessings to be derived from good books, and what a privilege they are. In *them* we have the best thoughts of the best men, expressed in their best manner. As the customs of this world go, there is necessarily great difficulty in getting access to a good man who is at all above us in circumstances and in years; nay, when they are of the same rank and age, the affairs

* See Reading's Sermons, IV. p. 137.

of this world so occupy our respective times, that it is difficult to get an opportunity to converse. What a privilege should I think it, if I could converse for an hour with the judicious Hooker, with Bishop Hall, Bishop Wilson, or Bishop Horne. But, by means of their *books*, I can converse with them whenever, and for as long as, I please, without the trouble and expense of a visit. How vast, how unspeakable, then, is the privilege, the honour, the blessing, of being enabled to converse with the blessed Jesus, the Son of God, nay with the great God himself, in his HOLY WORD, THE BIBLE! Abraham and Moses conversed with God “face to face, as a man converseth with his friend.” (Exod. xxxiii. 11.) But it was only *occasionally*. We may, now, converse with Christ and with God every day, and for any time,—not indeed “face to face,” in the full glory of the Godhead,—*that* was too much, too overpowering, even for Abraham, for Moses, and for Elias,—but we may converse with them *by faith* amidst such a glory as our imperfect faculties are able to conceive, and which shall one day be perfected in the heaven of heavens.

At the 24th verse, Solomon says, “He that spareth his rod,” that is, if no other method will do, “hateth his son;” that is, acts as ill by him, as much against his welfare, both here and hereafter, as if he hated him: “but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes,” before ill habits are contracted. Many are the passages in Proverbs, and other parts of Scripture, to the same effect: we will notice a few of them. Prov. xix. 18., “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.” xxii. 15, “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far

from him," xxiii. 13, 14., "Withhold not correction from a child ; for, if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." And, again, xxix. 15 and 17, "The rod and reproof give wisdom : but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."—"Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest : yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul."

With these precepts before them, it might seem strange, on the first consideration, that parents are so backward to correct their children ; or, rather, to correct them *properly*, for many do correct them, but it is at improper times, and in an improper manner. The causes of this are many and obvious. Both parents and children have a corrupt heart, till renewed by the grace of God, and, even then, some of the leaven of the *old man* yet remains. Parents, therefore, transgress themselves, and set their children a bad example, and either love and excuse those faults of their own which they see in their children ; or, if they see them *as faults*, they are ashamed, and justly so, to correct in another, what they know to be in themselves. How can the swearer, the sabbath-breaker, the malicious, revengeful person, the unclean, the stealer, the liar, the covetous, correct in his son *that* of which he himself is guilty ? But, where *this* is *not* the case, there is, to a feeling heart, much pain in being obliged to inflict pain ; it requires a deep sense of the sinfulness of sin, of the depravity of the heart of man, and the horrible consequence of suffering sin to go unchecked, in order to reprove, or use the rod ; but he who sees all this, will feel the necessity of chastising sin, and will do it. Many cannot bring themselves to correct a child till they are in anger, and a passion, which is the

very time when it should *not* be done, as it arises from a wrong cause, and can have no good effect. Correction should ever appear to spring from a *hatred of the sin*, and a *love of the object corrected*; as we are told of an excellent schoolmaster, who, when he was obliged to use the rod to a scholar, always repeated a sentence in Latin, the English of which is, “I do not chastise you, because I *hate*, but because I *love*, you *.”

[I have before said, from this pulpit, that, of the many, *many* obligations which I owe to my own parents, for nothing am I more indebted to them, than for the *seasonable correction* which they gave me. Nor is my obligation less to them for the *example* which they set me, and the *conversation* which I heard from them. It is but justice to the memory of my father, who was well known in this neighbourhood, as a clergyman and a magistrate, to say, that, though I lived with him till I was seventeen years of age, I never saw in him a misbecoming action, nor heard a misbecoming word. I valued him not enough while he was alive. How, indeed, *can* a youth of seventeen justly appreciate character? But my veneration for his memory increases with my years and knowledge.

Bear with me, my brethren, for this digression.]

We proceed, then, to the XIVth chapter. At the 6th verse, it is said, “A scorner,” that is one who is conceited, and thinks that he knows more than others, and seeks for faults and difficulties, and cavils at them, *he*, says Solomon, “seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth;” to a well-disposed, humble,

* Dr. Busby, I think. *Non castigo te quod in odio habui, sed quod amem*

and teachable mind. He adds, in the next verse, "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge;" that is, if he has no relish for pious and useful discourse, leave him, and seek for better company. And, again, at the 9th verse, "Fools make a mock at sin;" it is one of the surest marks of wickedness to make light of sin, or to speak of it in a trifling manner. One chief cause of the great spreading of sin, is the manner in which it is treated and spoken of. Were *sin* always treated as such, and spoken of with censure and abhorrence, many a one would be deterred from it, who now falls into it. Thus, a person, who would start at the term *sabbath breaking*, will not scruple to *go out*, or *visit*, or *travel*, or *do work* upon the sabbath. He, who would shrink with horror at the idea of *murder*, will, in higher life, meet his friend, in what is called *an affair of honour*, in which one, at least, is likely to be *killed*, and the other to forfeit his life for the deed; and, in lower life, two will meet to engage with their *fists*, when one of them is often killed. Again, that which should be branded with the name of *adultery*, or *fornication*, is called an affair of *gallantry*; and he, who would be angry to be told he was a *drunkard*, will, without scruple, own he was *merry*, or *elevated*, or *fresh*, when he had drank away his senses, and was worse than the beasts. And *robbery*, *lying* and *false-witness*, are glossed over in the same way, and "fools will make a mock at" them: "but," says Solomon, "among the righteous, there is favour:" that is, they have charity and compassion for the *souls* of men, a wish to open their eyes to sin, to save them from it, and bring them back to God.

At the 10th verse, "The heart knoweth his own bitterness:" we are not to judge of persons entirely by outward circumstances, without considering their tempers and passions. Every man bears about him *a corrupt nature*, which causes, or ought to cause, him "bitterness,"—for, if he does not feel it, he is ignorant of himself, and in a state of carnal security, and in a way to be lost. David looked into *his own heart* to gain a knowledge of others,—Psalm xxxvi. 1,—“My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.” Thus his heart knew its own bitterness: “and a stranger,” saith Solomon, “doth not intermeddle with his joy:” for every renewed heart has a joy, to which the unregenerate are strangers, a sweet sense of God’s forgiveness for Christ’s sake, and sweet intercourse with God and Christ, by prayer, by meditation, and by praise. “’Tis divine wisdom only” says Wogan *, “that rectifies this wrong propensity of the heart, and sets its bias right. We then see, that *bitterness* (if it proceed from the hatred, not the love, of sin) is the first and surest step to *joy*; that the very tears of repentance have more sweetness than all the pleasures of sin; and that no peace or comfort can be lasting and sincere, but what flow from thence. Then, and not till then, we find our Lord’s saying verified, that ‘they who mourn, are truly blessed.’”

At the 12th verse, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,” he may think his opinion and practice right and good, while it is quite wrong, and “the end thereof are the ways of death.” It

* Vol. IV. p. 511.

behoves, therefore, every one to look carefully to his ways, to see that they are right. The only way to be assured of this is, by comparing our actions with God's will, as declared in the Bible, in all times and in all cases, asking ourselves, Is this right? Is this agreeable to God's law? God sees me,—can I answer this to him?

At the 13th verse, it is said, “Even in *laughter*, the heart is sorrowful;” that is, there is often inward pain under the appearance of cheerfulness; “and the end of that mirth is heaviness;” this is true of all vain and sensual mirth.

It has been often remarked, that *man* is the only animal that is capable of *laughter*. Many animals feel and can express, both in their actions and by their voices, joy and playfulness almost approaching to mirth; but man alone, by *reason* and by *speech*, can combine ideas, and conceive and express them, so as to produce that sensation and expression which we call *laughter*. It is, therefore, the gift of God, and is to be used, like all his other gifts, for the good of ourselves and our fellow-creatures, and the glory of God. It is, like *wine*, wholesome, and “maketh glad the heart of man,” (Psalm civ. 15.) when used with *temperance*; but intoxicating and hurtful, when used upon improper occasions, and in too great a degree. It is of these different kinds, or degrees, of mirth, or laughter, that Solomon speaks, in different places in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance; but, by sorrow of the heart, the spirit is broken.” (Proverbs xv. 13.) “All the days of the afflicted are evil; but he that is of a merry heart, hath a continual feast.” (Proverbs xv. 15.) “A merry heart doth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones.”

(Proverbs xvii. 22.) Of the evil kind, Solomon speaks in the book of Ecclesiastes, ii. 1, 2., when, in his pursuit after happiness, he says, "I said in mine heart, Go to, now, I will prove thee with *mirth*, therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold this, also, is vanity. I said of *laughter*, It is mad;" that is, when it carries men beyond the bounds of reason, prudence, and sobriety: "and of mirth, What doeth it?" it is soon over, and leaves a man unsatisfied. Again, vii. 5, 6., "It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise," the sharpest reproof, "than for a man to hear the song of fools," their flattery, or their foolish and wicked songs. "For, as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool: this, also, is vanity:" it makes a great noise, or roaring, seems cheerful, but is quickly gone, and leaves those about it cold and comfortless. Job seems to have well understood the proper use and extent of mirth. There is a beautiful passage to this effect, in the xxixth chapter, the 21st, to the end of the 24th, verse, "Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. After my words, they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them. And they waited upon me, as for the rain, and they opened their mouth wide, as for the latter rain. If I *laughed* on them, they believed it not; and the light of my countenance they cast not down." That is, if I laid aside my gravity, and condescended to be cheerful and familiar among them, or even innocently *jested* with them, they could scarcely believe themselves; yet this did not breed contempt, and make them become presumptuous and too familiar, they still kept up their reverence for me, supposing I had a *serious* meaning, and were afraid of abusing my smiles.

At the 14th verse, Solomon says, “The backslider in heart,” that is, he who goes back from walking with God, after having made professions and vows of service, either through fear, or from a love of sin, “shall be filled with his own ways;” he shall have trouble and sorrow enough, yea, everlasting terror and torment: “and a good man shall be satisfied from himself;” he shall have present satisfaction from the consciousness of doing what is right, and from God’s presence and blessing, and have an abundant reward in the life to come.

At the 15th verse, he says, “The *simple* believeth every word;” believes every common report, and trusts every man’s promises: “but the *prudent* man looketh well to his going;” he considers, and observes it, to see that he has good ground for what he does. “*Policy* without *piety*,” says Orton, “has too much of *cunning* to be good; *piety* without *policy* is too *simple* to be safe. The great secret is to maintain an easy air with those with whom we converse, but resolutely to maintain such a reserve, as shall not put us into the power of any.” Our blessed Lord’s maxim, Matt. x. 16., is “Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” At the 18th verse, it is said, “The simple inherit folly:” but, here, the word *simple* means, thoughtless, giddy, extravagant people; they will quickly have nothing else but folly for their inheritance: “but the prudent are crowned with knowledge;” knowledge is both their ornament and support.

At the 25th verse it is said, “A true witness delivereth souls,” that is lives and reputations: “but a deceitful witness speaketh lies” in judicial causes, and, therefore, does great mischief. I have, before, in these discourses, spoken of *the false witness*, and

of God's denouncing of judgment upon him. But it is a subject which cannot be treated too often. At the 5th verse of this chapter, it is said, "A faithful witness will not lie : but a false witness will utter lies ;" that is, when we know a man's general character, we know how far to believe what he says. The xixth chapter, and 28th verse, "An ungodly witness scorneth judgment," that is reason, equity, scripture, and the judgment of God against perfidious persons : "and the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity ;" he swallows down greedily the greatest crimes, and is glad of any opportunity of committing them. And, again, xxiv. 28, 29., "Be not a witness against thy neighbour without a cause ; and deceive not with thy lips ;" do not endeavour, by crafty insinuations, to draw others into an ill opinion of him, though he has injured thee. "Say not, I will do to him, as he hath done to me : I will render to the man according to his work." Our having been deceived, or injured, by others, gives us no privilege to injure and deceive them. At the xxvth chapter, the 18th verse, it is, also, said, "A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow ;" that is, a complicated instrument of mischief, it smites and bruises like a maul, it pierces like a sword, when near at hand, and, at a distance, it wounds like a sharp arrow, so that a man is never out of its reach.

But, if such be the horrible character of *the false witness* what shall we say of one who incites him to it, whether by persuasion, by bribery, or by fear, by threatening ? The *subornation* of perjury, as it is called by our law, is a most detestable and crying sin, and is liable to punishment, by fine, imprisonment, and shameful whipping, but it is one of the

defects of our laws, that perjury and procuring false witness are not punished so severely as such sins require. But, in another world, as Solomon says, Prov. xix. 5., “A false witness shall not be unpunished ; and he that speaketh lies shall not escape ;” he who speaketh lies privately, though not confirmed by an oath, shall not escape the divine judgment, in this world, or the next, or in both.

The 32d and the 34th verses are both of great importance, but the 32d being the most so, we will reserve that to the last.

The 34th says, that “Righteousness exalteth a nation ; but sin is a reproach to any people.” And, what is true of *nations*, is true, also, of lesser communities, of *parishes* ; “Righteousness exalteth” parishes ; “but sin is a reproach to any people.” [Are *we exalted* ? are *we* in a *prosperous, flourishing* state ? We are *not*. And why ? Because we are *not righteous*, *sin* abounds, and is *a reproach* to us. I will not enter into particulars now, I have done that, before, in several instances. But, till we all endeavour earnestly to become righteous ourselves, and to make those around us so, likewise, we shall be a poor, unthriving, burdened, sinful and reproachful parish : “Seek ye, first, the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and” all worldly blessings “shall be added unto you.” (Matt. vi. 33.)] For

The 32d verse says, “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness ; but the righteous hath hope in his death.”

And what is the *hope* of *the righteous* ? We, *Christians*, have a *hope* much more clearly revealed to *us*, than it was to Solomon. St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 19., speaking of Christians, says, “If, in this life only, we have *hope* in Christ, we are of all men most

miserable." What, then, is our *hope* in CHRIST? Our Lord himself tells us, John iii. 16., "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Our *hope*, then, in CHRIST is, that, when we shall depart this life, through the death and *righteousness* of CHRIST, imputed to all true believers in *Him*, we shall be purged from all our sins, "this mortal" body "shall put on immortality," and "this corruptible" body "shall put on incorruption," 1 Cor. xv. 54., and, freed from sin, from sickness, from sorrow, and from death, we shall live, together with him, in that happiness, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.)

And which, that we may all attain, by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, may the holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three Persons, in one Godhead, grant and confirm. Amen.

SERMON XLVIII.

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—PROVERBS XV., XVI.

A SOFT ANSWER—A MERRY HEART—THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS
—THE WICKED MADE FOR THE DAY OF EVIL—CONVERSA-
TION OF THE WISE—THE HOARY HEAD A CROWN OF GLORY
—HE THAT RULETH HIS SPIRIT—THE LOT—GOD THE DIS-
POSER OF ALL EVENTS.

PROVERBS XV. 24.

*The way of Life is above to the Wise, that he may depart from hell
beneath.*

THE first lessons for the twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity are the XVth and the XVIth chapters of the book of Proverbs. These are, therefore, what we have this day to consider.

They contain many valuable maxims on subjects which we have treated before, and which we must, therefore, pass over now, noticing such only as are new, or such as may deserve a farther illustration.

The first verse is one of peculiar importance to high and low, rich and poor, parents and children, masters and servants; and to equals, also, such as friends and acquaintance, "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." It may be laid down as a general maxim, that "soft," or civil, words, are due from every one to every one,

from the low to the high, and from the high to the low ; and, were this duly observed, how many quarrels, how much blood-shed might be prevented : but pride comes in, and then comes contention.

The text, however, seems to be more particularly intended in respect to an answer, where what has been already said is not pleasant, as where there is *wrath*. This may be justifiable in the person who is angry, or it may not. A parent, or a master, may have just cause for anger with a child, or a servant, and one friend with another ; and, in this case, the least that the offending party can do, is to give a mild and submissive answer. But, even should the anger be without just grounds, still “ a soft answer” is the most likely method to turn away wrath, and it is what is here required. “ Where one side unwillingly offends, and the other side is of a merciful and reconcileable nature, there a soft answer will turn away wrath *.” “ The practice of” this, however, “ is not every man’s talent ; the weakness of our minds, or the warmth of our tempers, commonly making it a difficult task †.” But we shall have to speak again of the government of the spirit at the 32d verse of the XVIth chapter.

At the 15th verse, Solomon says, “ All the days of the afflicted are evil : but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.” If a poor man is afflicted, but has a *cheerful* temper, it makes up for the want of other enjoyments, and sweetens his evil days. It is astonishing how much people make their own happiness and misery : under the very same circumstances, one person will be contented and happy, and another will be miserable. This arises from the

* Reading, Vol. IV. p. 170. † Idem. p. 173.

temper, the disposition, the constitution. Many persons have naturally a contented and cheerful disposition, which takes things as they come, makes the best of them, and is always happy. But, where there is not this happy constitution of mind and body, much may be done in improving a naturally-bad disposition by reason and religion. Let us but reflect that God governs the world, and dispenses to us our situations in life, our riches, or our poverty, our sickness, or health, and how much more and better we have than we deserve, and we shall see reason, rather to rejoice in, and be thankful for, what we *have*, than to repine for what we *have not*. Let us but look at those who have less of this world's goods, and fewer sources of enjoyment, and we shall have abundant cause for happiness and thankfulness.

At the 24th verse is the passage which I have taken for my text, "The way of life is *above* to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." That is, "The way of life, or true religion, though an up-hill road and difficult, yet this circumstance balances all, that it preserves a man from hell, and leads a man's thoughts upwards to a holy and heavenly conversation, even in this life, and to the enjoyment of heaven itself in the life to come." This representation of *life*, as a journey, performed by one who is flying from *hell*, and seeking a place *above*, or heaven, reminds me of a work, which some of you, no doubt, have read, called "The Pilgrim's Progress, from this world to that which is to come." It is an allegory, "delivered under the similitude of a dream." Few works have been so well received, and so generally read, as this. The admirers of it have been of two kinds. Some have read it with

delight, merely as a work of entertainment, as the life and adventures of a pilgrim. As such, the importance and variety of the events, the propriety with which the characters are kept up, the ease with which the author passes from one circumstance to another, and the simplicity of the language, have recommended it to general esteem. Even in this point of view, the author, considering the disadvantages of his station and education, appears a great man. His name was Bunyan—*John Bunyan*,—and he was originally of the humble, though useful, trade of a *Tinker*, and lived at *Bedford*.

But those who have a taste for evangelical truth, have admired it on another account. They have considered it as a just picture of the Christian life, or a short account of experimental religion, very happily represented under the idea of a pilgrimage, or journey; an idea strictly conformable with the holy Scriptures, which describe a real Christian, as “a stranger and a pilgrim in the earth,”—as “seeking a better, that is an heavenly country;” and as “looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” The conviction, conversion, conflict, and comfort of God’s people, are painted with a masterly hand; and prove to all competent judges, that the author was *not an enthusiast*, as some have called him, but “a scribe” well “instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” One can scarcely meet with a case, or character, amidst the vast variety of persons and events, that daily occur to our observation, to which we cannot easily point out something answering to it in *the Pilgrim*. And we may say of it, what can rarely be said of other books, that those who read it repeat-

edly, still find something new upon every fresh perusal*.

I will give you a brief sketch of the work. The Pilgrim is called *Christian*, he is represented as walking about in great distress, with a *burden* upon his back, which is *sin*, and inquiring what he shall do to be saved? He is met by one, named *Evangelist*, who gives him a roll in which is written, "Fly from the wrath to come;" and he points out to him the way he must go, by "the wicket," or strait, "gate." Christian proceeds, when his wife and neighbours try to prevent him. He endeavours to persuade some of them to accompany him, but without success. He is, then, deceived by a *worldly-wise man*, and turns out of the way, and is greatly alarmed; but, happily meeting with Evangelist, he returns to the right path, and proceeds on his journey. He arrives at the wicket gate, where he knocks, and is kindly received. He gets to the house of a person called *the Interpreter*, where he is delightfully entertained. He arrives at *the cross*—the knowledge of Christ crucified—on seeing which his *burden of sins* falls to the ground. After other adventures, he enters *the valley of Humiliation*, where he is fiercely assaulted by *Apollyon*, the destroyer, but overcomes him. We next see him sorely distressed in *the valley of the shadow of death*; through which, however, he passes unhurt. He, then, meets with a *Faithful* companion, with whom he has much profitable conversation; but, arriving at a town of *Vanity*, and at the time of the *fair*, they meet with persecution. Released, however, he meets with another, a *Hopeful* companion;

* See Burder's preface to his edition of the work.

but they mistake their way, and fall into the hands of *Despair*; but, escaping, they are entertained by shepherds on *the Delectable Mountains*. They meet, then, with *Ignorance*; and, afterwards, with an *Atheist*; but they, at length, arrive at the pleasant country of *Beulah*, and, safely passing the river of *Death*, are admitted into THE GLORIOUS CITY OF GOD.

There is a second part, which gives an account of the pilgrimage of his wife and children.

I have been thus particular in my account of this book, in the hope of inducing some who have not already read it, to give it an attentive reading; when, I have no doubt, with God's blessing upon it, they will receive both delight and profit. To refined readers, the quaint style and language will require some little indulgence; but there is an improved edition*; and there are, likewise, editions with notes, by Mason, by Scott and by Burder.

We will proceed, now, to the XVIth chapter, and, here, at the 4th verse, a text of some importance meets us, "The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea even the wicked for the day of evil." This passage has been supposed, by several eminent writers, to refer to the *predestination* of *the elect*, and the *reprobation* of *the wicked*; and, in order to get over this, several expositors have proposed to translate it differently, "The Lord hath made all things to answer for themselves," or aptly to refer to one another, "yea even the wicked for the evil day," that is to be the executioner of evil to others: on which account they are called in Scripture,—Isaiah x. 5.,—the rod of Jehovah, and,—Psalm xvii. 13.,—his sword. But there is no necessity for rejecting

* By the Rev. Joshua Gilpin.

our own translation, the plain and obvious sense of which is, that there is nothing in the world which does not contribute to the glory of God, and promote the accomplishment of his adorable designs. The pious and the wicked alike produce this end; the wicked, whom God has destined to punishment, *on account of their impiety*, serve to display his justice, as Job says,—xxi. 30.,—“the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath,” and, consequently, to manifest his glory. “God,” (says one* who was a strenuous advocate for the doctrines of election and reprobation,) “made man neither to damn him, nor to save him, but for his own glory, and *that* is secured, whether in his salvation, or damnation; nor did, or does, God make men wicked: he made man upright, and man has made himself wicked; and, being so, God may justly appoint him to damnation for his wickedness, in doing which he glorifies his justice †.”

The 20th, to the end of the 30th verse, with the exception of the 25th and 26th verses, is a string of maxims upon the conversation of the wise and the foolish: “He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good,” respect and success: “and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he;” true religion only can make a man happy. “The wise in heart shall be called prudent,” that is, they shall have the honour due to their wisdom: “and the sweetness of their lips increaseth learning;” eloquence, or a flow of suitable and agreeable words, adds a new value to it; and makes it more agreeable, and spreading, and instructive. “Understanding is a well-spring

* Dr. Gill on the text.

† Horne's Introd. Vol. II. p. 606.

of life unto him that hath it ;” it streams forth for the instruction of others, diffusing health and life. This was eminently true of the understanding, or wisdom, which Solomon taught, but how much more true is it of that, of which our Lord spake, to the woman of Samaria when he said,—John iv. 10, 14., —“ If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith, Give me to drink ; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”—“ Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life :”—“ but,” says Solomon, “ the instruction of fools is folly ;” they only betray their own folly, and no good is to be got by them. “ The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips ;” he speaks from experience, which makes what he says the more regarded. “ Pleasant words are as an honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.” Such words of wisdom, as were before described, are not only pleasant, but wholesome ; like honey, they have an agreeable taste, and a medicinal, or healing, virtue. This is true of the *matter* of our *discourse*, and it is also true of the *manner* of it. “ Words spoken pleasantly,” in a mild and kind tone of voice, “ are, as an honey-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.” Much of the comfort and happiness of life depend upon the general manner in which people speak to each other. What should we think of the man who never approached another without giving him a blow ? He would justly be considered as a nuisance in society, and would be obliged to find security for his good behaviour. But, is he more excusable, who never speaks without wounding

the more tender part, *the mind*? “All things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.” (Matt. vii. 12.) As people would be spoken to, even so should they speak to others.

At the 27th verse, Solomon says, “An ungodly man diggeth up evil;” that is, is always contriving to do mischief; with great labour and industry diving into what is secret by surmises and suspicions: “and in his lips there is as a burning fire;” his lying slanderous speeches are very mischievous. “A froward man soweth strife” where there is love and peace; “and a whisperer separateth chief friends,” by carrying tales and misrepresentations. “A violent man enticeth his neighbour, and leadeth him into the way that is not good;” contrives to do him the greatest injury. Let *us* aim at a contrary character, and attempt to draw our friends into the ways of religion. “He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things;” he does it with deliberation and contrivance: “moving his lips, he bringeth evil to pass;” giving *signs* to his associates, that they may execute their wicked purposes.

At the 21st verse, Solomon says, “The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.” It was customary with the Jews, and, also, with the Greeks and Romans, and, probably, other nations, to give *crowns*, as rewards and honours, upon certain occasions, as the gaining a victory in battle, or in the games, or for excelling in various parts of agriculture. Thus the angel in the Revelation, xiv. 14, who was to reap the earth, “had on his head a golden crown:” and St. Peter says, Ep. 1. v. 4., to “the elders” who feed their flocks faithfully, that, “when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye

shall receive *a crown of glory* that fadeth not away." The crowns given by the chief shepherd were composed of flowers and boughs, which soon faded ; but what Christ will give, will never fade, and are strictly crowns of glory. Those given to kings and conquerors were sometimes of gold, and sometimes, perhaps, of silver. The crown of thorns, placed, in derision, upon the head of our blessed Lord, when he was mocked by the soldiers, probably, was *not* a crown made wholly and solely of thorns, as we usually see it in pictures, but was a crown of leaves, or branches, like, in *appearance* to those given to kings and conquerors, but having great thorns concealed amongst them, to wound and cause acute pain, mixing cruelty with the mockery *. What, then, the *crown of glory* is to the king, the conqueror, or the winner of a prize, such is *gray hairs*, "the hoary head," to him who has lived many years in "righteousness." It is an honourable thing to be an aged saint ; such should be accounted worthy of all reverence, and young people should be engaged to be good betimes, that they may have this honour, if they should live to be old. But, when one has grown old in iniquity, when his "sins," his wilful, presumptuous sins, "are more in number than the hairs of his head," (Psalm xl. 12.) then is every gray hair a witness against him of years passed in vanity and wickedness, and "the hoary head is a crown" of *infamy*, instead of glory.

At the 32d verse, it is said, "He that is slow to anger," not easily put into a passion, nor resents a provocation, "is better than the mighty : and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city."

* Horne, Vol. III. p. 157, Note.

This maxim is, in some measure, connected with the 1st verse of the XVth chapter, “A soft answer turneth away wrath : but grievous words stir up anger :” only *that* relates more particularly to words, to *speech* ; but *this* to *actions*. It is said, again, XXV. 28., “He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls :” and some of the most glorious conquerors, amidst the greatest success and triumph, have been, through the violence of their passions, the objects of pity to all who read their history ; as he who was *called* Alexander *the great*, who, having conquered the world, was unable to subdue his own violent spirit, and, in a fit of anger, killed his faithful friend Clitus.

We have this subject most fully illustrated in the case of David, Nabal and Abigail. David, when obliged to flee from Saul, lived with his soldiers on the outskirts of the wilderness, where the numerous flocks of Nabal fed ; and, instead of making depredations upon them, as many captains would have done, he restrained his soldiers, and defended the flocks from wild beasts and robbers. When Nabal sheared his sheep and made great provision, even to excess, David sent a civil message to request something for himself and his men. To this Nabal sent a rude, a churlish, reply. His “grievous words stirred up anger,” and David set off with his men to avenge himself of him. Abigail, the amiable wife of Nabal, heard of this ; and, taking a present of their good things for him, she met him approaching in wrath, and, alighting from the beast on which she rode, addressed him in “soft” and soothing words, and “turned away” his “wrath.” David ruled his spirit, and was, thus, “better,” more glorious, than when he had “slain his ten thousands.”

It is said, Proverbs xix. 11., “The discretion of a man deferreth his anger,” till he is cool, and has considered the matter; “and it is his *glory* to *pass over* a transgression,” not to revenge it, though the perverse judgment of the world is contrary.

How much admiration and envy have been excited by him who is styled,—and justly so,—“*The Hero of Waterloo*.” But every one has it in his power—with God’s assistance—to gain a *victory of more difficult, and more glorious*, achievement,—a victory over his own corrupt passions.

At the 33d verse, it is said, “The *lot* is cast into the lap: but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”

A *lot* is any thing cast, or drawn, in order to determine a point in debate: as it is said, XVIII. 18., “The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.” It is a solemn appeal to God for an immediate interposal of his directing power, for determining the affair; and, on that account, ought to be used in nothing, but what is important, and cannot otherwise be peaceably determined; and it is to be used with reverence and prayer, as may be seen by consulting 1 Samuel xiv. 41. and Acts i. 24—26. By *lot* it was determined which of the scape-goats should be offered, and which dismissed into the wilderness. (Levit. xvi. 8—10.) By *lot* the land of Canaan was divided to the Hebrew tribes, and the Levites had their cities assigned, and their order of sacred service determined: (Numbers xxvi. 55, 56. xxxiii. 54. xxxiv. Joshua xiv. xxi. 1 Chron. vi. 54, 61. xxiv. xxv.) and there are many other instances. This kind of *lot* is called the *decisory*, or *deciding*, lot; but there is another kind of *lot*, called the *divinatory*, or *divining*, which superstitious per-

sons use for discovering the will of God. The silly and wicked means which they employ, it is neither necessary, nor right, that I should mention here; and these, not being ways of God's appointing, must be the height of presumption, and very wicked.

There is, however, one mode of divination, which, from the sacredness of the means used, might seem to be more allowable, and, therefore, requires to be mentioned and censured; it is called *bibliomancy*, or *divination by the Bible*, and consists in what is called *dipping into* THE BIBLE, taking passages of Scripture at hazard, and drawing from thence indications, or signs, respecting the present and future state of the soul*. But we have no authority from God to use the Bible in this way. It is given us to shew us the will of God, and how we are to regulate our lives by it, and to reveal to us the system of salvation through Christ; but, as to *future events*, we are to remember what our Lord said to St. Peter, when he made an inquiry of curiosity, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

The *divining lot* is not, then, to be used on any account whatever, and the *deciding lot* in those cases only where reason and the revealed will of God cannot decide for us; and, then, it should be done with seriousness, and piety, and prayer to God.

As to there being such a thing as *chance*, in the sense in which that word is often understood by ungodly persons, namely *an event without a sufficient cause*, it is a mere vanity, a nothing; and the only sense in which it can be allowed, is to denote that an event happened without any necessary and fore-known cause, or that the cause was unknown to us.

* See Dr. Adam Clarke's Letter to a Preacher, 3d Edition, p. 25.

But it is a word better not used, for every thing in this world—every thing that is *good* is the effect of Providence,—of God,—of that “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all :” (Eph. iv. 6.) by whom even “the hairs of our head are all numbered,” and not one of the meanest of his creatures “falls to the ground” without its being his act, or with his knowledge and permission. (Matt. x. 29—31.)

Wogan, in his Essay on the proper Lessons*, commenting upon this verse, says, “every good man may draw hence, this comfortable reflection, that he is not left to the caprice or hazard of a blind chance ; but that his least, as well as greatest, concerns are under the constant and unerrable direction of Infinite Wisdom, who maketh all things to work together for good to them that love God.”

It is on HIM, then, that all our hopes and confidence are to be placed, to HIM all our wishes and our wants are to be made known, and to HIM all our prayers are to be offered up ; and, now that CHRIST is revealed to us as the only MEDIATOR and INTERCESSOR between God and man, all our prayers are to be offered up *through* HIM, and our petitions begged *for* HIS SAKE.

* Vol. IV. p. 567.

SERMON XLIX.

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—PROV. XVII—XXXI.

THE WISE SERVANT—THE ASSAY OF THE HEART—CHILDREN'S
CHILDREN—RETIREMENT—A WOUNDED SPIRIT—THE SOUL
—THE DESIRE TO SERVE—THE DRUNKARD—THE LOVE OF
PLEASURE—NO WISDOM AGAINST THE LORD—A GOOD NAME
—THE RICH AND THE POOR—FATHER AND MOTHER—TO-
MORROW—AGUR—KING LEMUEL—THE WIFE THAT MAKETH
ASHAMED—THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN—THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

PROVERBS xix. 2.

That the soul be without knowledge it is not good.

THE first lessons for the twenty-sixth Sunday after Trinity are the XVIIth and the XIXth chapters of the book of Proverbs, and there are no more Sunday lessons taken from it, though some of the remaining chapters are appointed as lessons on some of the Saints' days. I propose, therefore, now, to begin at the XVIIth chapter, and notice briefly such matters as appear to me of most consequence, and which have not been treated before, or which seem to call for a farther illustration.

At the 2d verse, it is said, "A wise *servant* shall have rule over a son that causeth shame: and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren." That is, a wise and faithful servant comes to be so much respected and valued, that he holds as great,

or a greater, place in his master's regard, than an unworthy son, and will be considered by him in the disposing of his property, and he often gets money sufficient to purchase the estate which a foolish son is obliged to sell.

At the 3d verse, "The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold : but the Lord trieth the hearts." This is a metaphor, or figure, taken from the assaying, or purifying of metals, by exposing them to an intense heat, in a furnace, and, thus, separating the pure metal from the dross : as it is said, again XXV. 4., "take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel," meaning a beautiful vessel, "for the finer." And, in the same manner, "the Lord trieth the hearts" of men. Some he tries by afflictions, and some by prosperity ; but all his dispensations, in this world, are *trials*, and intended as such, and serve to prove us to God and to ourselves.

At the 6th verse, "Children's children are the crown of old men : and the glory of children are their fathers." That is, it is a great honour and happiness to a man to live to be old, and to see many descendants brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ;" and, so, likewise, it is the happiness, the honour, the glory of children to have been born of worthy parents, and, especially, if they see them flourishing in a green old age, honoured by men, and, what is better, favoured of God.

The XVIIIth chapter, the 1st verse, it is said, "Through desire, a man, having separated himself, seeketh, and intermeddleth with all wisdom : " or, rather, "A man of retirement seeketh after his desire, and intermeddleth with," or is conversant in, "all wisdom." *Retirement* is of the greatest use to improve both the mind and the soul. He who never

converses with his soul alone can know nothing of it, and has no means of improving it. And, thus, it is, that those who cannot bear to be *alone*, but must be always in company, neglect the best means of wisdom and salvation.

The 13th verse, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is shame and folly to him." This is true, both of him who answers before he hath heard the *whole* of a matter, where there is only one person to hear; and, also, of him who answers without hearing *both* sides, when there are *two*. How difficult is it, often, to decide, and give an answer, when one has heard, and weighed, *both* sides. And, without doing this, it is folly and shame. To the same effect it is said, verse 17., "He that is first in his own cause," that is, he who comes and tells his own story, "seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh" with quite a different story, "and searcheth him," probes the matter to the bottom, and sets it in quite a different light.

The 14th verse, "The spirit of a man," when it is whole and sound, "will sustain his infirmity," will bear up under dangers and troubles; "but a wounded spirit who can bear?" What hath a man to comfort and uphold him, if he has not the reason of his own mind, the testimony of his conscience, and a sense of God's favour? Great care should be taken, therefore, to govern the passions, and keep the spirits calm, in order to prevent the often dreadful consequences of a wounded spirit.

The XIXth chapter, the 2d verse, which I have taken as my text, "That the soul be without knowledge, it is not good:" How many are there who never think about their *soul*, and do not strive to

obtain that knowledge for it, which is to nourish it to eternal life!

What, my brethren, do you think of that *living, immaterial*, (that is, not made of *matter*, but *spirit*,) that *active* substance, or principle, in man, whereby he *perceives, thinks, remembers, reasons* and *wills*? What do you think of the vast capacities of this principle, its boundless desires, great improvements, dissatisfaction with the present state, and desire of some kind of religion? What do you think of that consciousness that men have of sinning, the sting of conscience, and a conviction of the justice and providence of God? Do not all these considerations speak, that there is a something within us more than mere animal life and sensation? This is *that* of which our Lord spake, when he said, Matt. x. 28, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the *soul*: but, rather, fear him which is able to destroy both *soul* and body in hell.” And, again, Matt. xvi. 26., “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own *soul*? or what shall a man give in exchange for his *soul*?” This is that, then, which chiefly requires “knowledge,” knowledge of itself, whence it came, what is its present state, what are its duties and its hopes, and what is to be its state in a world beyond this, which is to last forever, and forever, and forever. At the 8th verse, it is said, “He that getteth wisdom loveth his own *soul*: he that keepeth understanding shall find good.” 22d verse, “The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar.” That is, “If a man hath a *desire* to serve us, it is to be esteemed, and accepted, as a *kindness*, though it be not in his power to perform, nor, perhaps, in his

capacity to use, the proper means : his *desire* to serve us is a *kindness* ; the *will*, therefore, ought to be accepted as the *deed*. But, to promise what is in our power, and, then, to break our word, and disappoint, is a worse character than to be a *poor man*, and stand in need of help. *Better* is it to be a beggar, who yet is rich in *good will*, than such a *liar*. In the moral and spiritual system of things, not he that wants *ability*, but he that wants the *will*, to do good, is the *poor man* *.”

The XXth chapter, the 1st verse, Solomon again introduces the subject of *drinking*, and says, “ Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise ;” it makes a man abusive and quarrelsome, and leads him to say and do foolish things. Let him have ever so much sense, he reduceth himself to a level with an idiot ; yea, with a brute. It is strange that *drunkenness* should be the fault of so many *sensible* people, whom one would think *pride* would keep from it, if they had no religion. Solomon says, again, upon this subject, xxiii. 20, 21., “ Be not among wine-bibbers ; among riotous eaters of flesh ;” avoid the society of drunkards and gluttons : “ For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty ; and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags ;” an idle, trifling, sleepy habit, will make men neglect their business, and expose them to want and infamy. He takes up the subject, again, at the 29th verse of the same chapter, “ Who hath woe ? who hath sorrow ? who hath contentions ? who hath babbling ? who hath wounds without cause ? who hath redness of eyes ? They that tarry long at the wine ; they that go to seek mixed wine.”

* Wogan, Vol. IV. p. 594.

After, thus, stating the bad effects of it, he gives this seasonable and important advice, "Look not thou upon wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." Methinks I see the drunkard holding up his glass to the light, and singing, "Boy, let the liquid ruby flow." And what is the end of it? Let us attend to Solomon, "At the last, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder;" it will be rank poison in thy veins, destroy thy peace, and ruin thy soul,—thy precious, immortal soul.

At the XXth chapter, the 6th and 7th verses, it is said, "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?" Most men pretend to be very good, but it is difficult to find common honesty. "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him;" he entails a blessing upon his posterity, it is happy to be the children of such a parent.

The XXIst chapter, the 17th verse, it is said, "He that loveth pleasure, shall be a poor man," that is, he that is fond of sports and diversions, and feasts, and fairs, and statutes, will never thrive, and, probably, they will bring him to ruin. St. Paul goes farther, 1 Tim. v. 6, and says, that "She that liveth in pleasure is *dead* while she liveth." That is, whosoever liveth in what is called a life of pleasure, his soul is as much lost, or dead, to all spiritual purposes, as if his body was dead, and his soul separated from it. "He that loveth wine and oil," adds Solomon, the luxuries and delicacies of life, "shall not be rich."

At the 30th verse, "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord." That is, there is no natural sagacity, no improvement of

parts, or human policies, that is, confederacies and combinations, that shall take place to overturn the counsels and designs of God. "The horse is prepared against the day of battle; but safety is of the Lord." That is, whatever means man may use, they will have no success without God's blessing. So David says, Psalm cxxvii. 1., "Except the Lord build the house," that is, unless God gives his assistance and blessing, "their labour is but lost that build it." And St. Paul acknowledges the same thing, 1 Cor. iii. 6., "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God giveth the increase."

XXII. 1., "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." If men would but consider the immense value of *a good name*, a character for honesty, industry, truth, sobriety, civility, they would be more careful to preserve it, even for their worldly interest. It is, indeed, in itself, *great riches*, for every one would be willing to employ, to trust, and to reward such a one. Yet men will forfeit their *good name* for a trifle, for a little money got by cheating, for idling, for a lie, for a day's drunkenness, for a churlish humour. But, says Solomon, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches; and loving favour rather than silver and gold." The respect and kindness of friends, of neighbours, and of masters and mistresses, is of unspeakable value.

The 2d verse, "The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all." Though there seems to be a great difference, in some respects, between the rich and the poor; yet, when we come to consider the matter closely, and in a religious light, there is less than, at first, was supposed. The poor man has, probably, as much real happiness, in his humble cottage, with his plain fare, and in his

homely clothes, as the rich man has in his splendid mansion, with his profusion of delicacies, and his more costly garments. The poor man may, indeed, not have exactly as much as he wants, and may wish for *more*; and the rich man would be better, more healthy, more comfortable, and more happy, had he *less*; and, to place the want of one, against the superabundance of the other, the poor man has, really,—reasonably and religiously speaking,—the advantage: as it is said, xxvii. 7, “The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” So that, duly balancing things, and setting one evil against another, they may be fairly said to “meet together,” even as to this world; and, at death, they shall all, certainly, meet together, and be upon a level; in heaven, the only distinction is, who feared God? and who sought him through Christ? The afflicted beggar Lazarus is now in heaven. Let the rich, therefore, be humble, and fear; let the poor be humble, and contented. “The Lord,” who is all-wise and all-good, “is the maker of them all,” and has assigned them their respective stations.

The 6th verse, “Train up a child in the way he should go; and, when he is old, he will not depart from it.” This is given as a general maxim, and is generally, though not universally, true, and is a great motive to a prudent and pious education of children.

I have, before, stated, that the book of Proverbs may be divided into *five* parts, or sections: That the *first*, contained in the first *nine* chapters, is an *Introduction*. The *second* is contained from the beginning of the Xth chapter, to the end of the 16th verse of the XXIId chapter, and consists of what may,

strictly and properly, be called *Proverbs*. The *third* part begins at the 17th verse of the XXIIId chapter, and, as you may observe, changes the mode of address, “Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thy heart unto my knowledge:” The teacher drops the Proverb style, and addresses his scholar, as if he was *present*, and gives renewed, and more connected, exhortations on the study of *Wisdom*. This continues to the end of the XXIVth chapter; but there is only one passage in this part that we can spare time to notice.

The XXIIId chapter, the 22d verse, “Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.” There is scarcely a more unnatural and offensive sight, than that of a child—I mean of any age,—for, the older, the worse,—who despises, or, in any way, disrespectfully, or unkindly, treats an aged parent. Whatever their infirmities of body, of mind, or of temper may be, they have done more, and borne more for us, than we can ever do for them. Aged parents, indeed, should be careful not to give unnecessary trouble, or to cause vexation; but, if they do *not* do so, this will not excuse the child from bearing with the parent. See a helpless, troublesome, fretful child in the arms of a mother. *Such*, probably, have *each of us* been, and they who can in *any way* requite this, should consider it both *a duty* and *a pleasure*. Agur says on this subject, at the XXXth chapter, and the 17th verse, “The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.” This may be considered as a general denunciation of evil against the undutiful child. But I have no doubt that it is often even literally fulfilled

in these days. Children who have despised the instruction of their parents, and have left them early and unnaturally, have become robbers and murderers, and, hanging on the gallows, have become the prey of the birds. Many, who have run away on account of their wickedness, and enlisted for soldiers, have been killed in battle, and, lying unburied in the field, the ravens of the valley have come and picked out their eyes.

We come, then, now to the XXVth chapter, which begins the *fourth* part, or section, of the book of Proverbs, and which goes on to the end of the XXIXth chapter; it consists of those Proverbs of Solomon which were collected by persons employed for the purpose by Hezekiah. Of these, many are repetitions of the Proverbs which we have had before, and many are farther illustrations of the same subjects, and some of these I have already noticed in connection with them. The time, therefore, getting on, I must not dwell upon these chapters. There is one sentence, however, of such awful importance, that I must not pass it over. It is the 1st verse of the XXVIIth chapter, “Boast not thyself of *to-morrow*; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” Do not boast, or speak presumptuously, or decidedly, of what you will do the next day, for a thousand accidents, or a different course of God’s providence, or death, may render fruitless all thy designs and expectations. St. James, in his epistle, iv. 13—17, treats this subject in its only true light: “Go to, now, ye that say, to-day, or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For, what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a time,

and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, IF THE LORD WILL, we shall live, and do this, or that. But, now, ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

The XXXth chapter begins the *fifth* part, or section, of the book of Proverbs. It is called "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel and Ucal." Who this *Agur* was it is impossible to say. He here speaks very modestly of himself to those who it seems had inquired of him in some difficult matters; and declares, that, were he bred in the schools of the prophets, and arrived at the highest wisdom among men, it is impossible to give such an account of the works of God, as was desired, much less of God himself: he professeth his esteem of God's word, and his desire of a moderate share of worldly things: he mentions four kinds of persons very wicked; four things insatiable; four things wonderful; four small, but wise; and four comely in going. What is commonly called *Agur's prayer*, the 7th, to the end of the 9th verse, should be committed to the memory and the heart of every one: "Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die. Remove far from me *vanity* and *lies*," all desires after the *vanities* of the world, and every thing not conformable to the *truth*, or word and will of God: "give me neither poverty, nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me;" fix me in the middle situation of life, and, if I should be so vain, as to think that riches will be no snare to me, disappoint my expectations: "Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?" lest I become ungodly and

irreligious : “ or, lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain ;” that is, forswear myself to cover the theft.

The XXXIst chapter purports to be “ The words of king *Lemuel*, the prophecy that his mother taught him.” Some commentators have thought that *Lemuel* is only another name for Solomon, that the name signifies one *belonging to God*, and is nearly of the same meaning with *Jedediah*, another of Solomon’s names ; and that this was what his mother Bathsheba taught him to commit to memory. But the more probable conjecture seems to be, that the woman who gave this instruction to her son was a Jewish woman, married to some neighbouring prince, and who appears to have been most anxious to guard her son against vice, to establish him in the principles of virtue, and to unite him to a wife of the most amiable qualities. Her description of “ a virtuous woman,” or an excellent wife, is from the 10th verse to the 31st, both included, that is, to the end of the chapter and book : but there are several passages, in former chapters, which we have reserved to be considered in this place. We will, *first*, take the character of the *bad* wife, and, then, of the *good*.

Chapter XI. 22., “ As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout,” which is more noticed, and more despised, on that account, “ so is a fair woman which is without discretion,” who is without taste, without judgment of what is right and wrong, and not considerate of consequences. XII. 4., “ A virtuous woman,” a diligent, active woman, as the word signifies, who applies closely to family business, “ is a crown to her husband,” an ornament and a blessing to him : “ but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his

bones ;” though he does not shew it publicly, it is a continual and incurable vexation to him. XIV. 1. “ Every wise woman buildeth her house ;” by prudence and good management, she promotes the order, prosperity, and credit of the family, which is a mark of true wisdom : “ but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands ;” by her pride, prodigality and idleness, she contributes to the ruin of it.

XIX. 13. “ A foolish son is the calamity of his father : and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping :” a wicked son and a scolding wife are two of the saddest plagues in a family : this maxim is repeated, and illustrated, XXVII. 15., where it is said, “ A continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman are alike ;” that is, the contentions of a wife are like the continual droppings of rain through the broken tiling of a house, or the rain itself without. XXI. 9. “ It is better to dwell in the corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.” It must be remembered here, that the houses in that country were made with flat roofs, with battlements, or parapets,—and on these, especially in the corners, they often made little tents, or tabernacles, or pavilions, for the sake of the air, so that Solomon says, it is better to dwell, alone, in one of these, than in the house, however spacious and splendid, with a brawling woman. This maxim is repeated, XXV. 24., amongst the proverbs collected for Hezekiah, and XXI. 19., it is said, “ It is better to dwell in the wilderness,” quietly, though alone, “ than with a contentious and an angry woman.” XV. 17. It is said, “ Better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith ;” the meanest provision, with family peace and love, is better than the greatest

luxury with hatred and strife. This sentiment is repeated XVII. 1. "Better is a dry morsel," a dry crust, "and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife;" than the greatest feast upon the remains of the most costly sacrifices.

It seems, then, that, in Solomon's days, complaints were made of wives for strife, anger, contentions, brawlings and hatred; and it is a melancholy truth, that such complaints are still made, now, amongst *Christians*; and that there is oftener cause for complaint, than complaints are made. We hear, often, of bad husbands, neglected and deserted wives, and deserted homes and families. But is not the wife herself sometimes the cause of this? Does not *she*, by her anger, strife, contentions, brawling and hatred, make herself and home unpleasant, if not hateful, to her husband? Is it not this, which, in higher life, drives the husband to the tavern, the gaming-house, and the mistress; and, in lower life, to the ale-house and the harlot? Should a wife ever feel that her husband is not what she wishes him to be, that he neglects herself, and his family, and home, let her ask herself, Am not I to blame? Have I endeavoured to make myself and his home agreeable to him? If there is no cause for self-reproach on this account, still let her rest assured that reproaches, anger, strife, contentions, brawling and hatred, will never mend the matter, will never promote love, and reclaim the husband. The woman was created by God as the *help-meet* to man, to assist in fulfilling his wishes, and as the soother of his cares, *not* as the *ruler*, the *reprover*, and the *plague*. Nor has a wife any right to complain that her husband is spending their substance abroad, while she is lavishing it on vain dress and shew and dissipation at home. But

the mother of Lemuel has told us, at some length, *what A WIFE should be*: the description is given of one of some consequence; but wives in all conditions of life, may apply it to themselves, by some little accommodations and alterations:

“Who can find a virtuous woman?” She is not to be found every where, nor by every body; but she *may* be found; and, when she *is* found, “her price is far above rubies,” above the most precious jewels, or most costly earthly ornaments. “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,” in her chastity, prudence, and fidelity; he has no jealousy, nor uneasy apprehensions; “so shall he have no need of spoil;” he shall have no need of spoiling others to enrich himself, and no fear of being plundered, as some are, by their wives. “She shall do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life;” she will take the greatest care to engage and keep his affections, she will study to oblige and please him; and this, not only in sudden fits of good humour, but all her days. “She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.” It was customary in those days, before manufactures were so improved as with us, for ladies to spin and weave; it is said, afterwards, “she layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff,” a mode of spinning not much used now; but, thus, the excellent wife provides employment for her servants, and sets them a good example. “She is like the merchants’ ships, she bringeth her food from afar.” Whatever is the produce of other countries which may be necessary, or convenient, that she procures. “She riseth, also, while it is yet night,” before break of day, she riseth early to attend to her domestic cares, “and giveth meat to her household, and a

portion to her maidens ;” she giveth food to those who go abroad to their work, and to her maidens at home. “ She considereth a field, and buyeth it : with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard ;” by the commodities spun and woven in the family she buys land and plants vineyards. It is said, afterwards, “ She maketh fine linen and selleth it ; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.” “ She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.” She does not make little difficulties an excuse for indolence, but acts resolutely, though with mildness. “ She perceiveth that her merchandise is good.” There are no damaged articles amongst it. “ Her candle goeth not out by night,” she takes as much of the night as can be spared from necessary sleep. She is industrious and saving ; and, enabled by this, “ She stretcheth out her hand to the poor ; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy ;” she is enabled to be charitable, and do good to the poor around her. “ She is not afraid of the snow for her household : for all her household are clothed with *scarlet*,” or, rather, with *double, thick, warm* garments. “ She maketh herself coverings of tapestry,” that is, cloth beautifully figured in the loom, or with the needle ; “ her clothing is silk and purple ;” the more honourable, because her own work. “ Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.” He is known as the husband of her who is so wise, prudent and industrious. “ Strength and honour are her clothing.” She has much resolution, and despises those difficulties by which many are discouraged ; “ and she shall rejoice in time to come ;” the remembrance of her well-spent life will cheer her spirit in old age and death. “ She openeth her mouth with wisdom ; and

in her tongue is the law of kindness ;” her conversation is sensible, and on the most serious and important subjects ; and there is softness, tenderness, and kindness in every thing which she says, and which is as effectual with those whom she addresses as *a law*. “ She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness ;” she looks to the conduct of her servants, how they perform their duty : she neither suffers them to gad and gossip abroad, nor to be idle at home ; she sees that her children be well educated, and behave themselves aright, and sets them all an example of diligence : and, in consequence of this, “ Her children rise up, and call her blessed ; her husband, also, and he praiseth her :” they set themselves to commend her, and say, “ *Many* daughters have done virtuously, but *thou* excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain ;” a graceful behaviour and beautiful features are trifling in themselves, have often covered ill qualities and vices, and quickly decay ; “ but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands ; and let her own works praise her in the gates.” She will receive sincere and warm commendations from all that know her here, even from the great men of the city where she dwells, and, finally, from God himself.

Solomon begins his Proverbs with declaring, that “ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ;” and Lemuel, here, instructed by his wise and pious mother, assures us, that, the “ woman that feareth the Lord,” shall be the most excellent of her sex, the praise of man, and the approved of God.

Let *us*, then, brethren and sisters, high and low, rich and poor, old and young, unite, with one heart and mind, in prayer to God, that he will shower

down upon *us* that true and saving Wisdom, which shall lead us, in the faith and fear of God,—the holy, blessed and glorious Trinity,—safely and happily, through this life, to that holy and happy heaven, where all shall be “as the angels of God.” (Matt. xxii. 30.)

SERMON L.

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.—ISAIAH I, II.

THE PROPHETS—ISAIAH—THE INGRATITUDE OF ISRAEL—
CHRIST WILL DESTROY IDOLATRY.

ISAIAH i. 2, 3.

*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth : for the Lord hath spoken,
I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled
against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's
crib : but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*

ON the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, when we entered upon the writings of the prophets with Jeremiah, being pressed for time, having had to say something of most of the books in our Bible between the 2d Book of Kings and Jeremiah, I said that I would defer, till the first Sunday in Advent, when we should begin Isaiah, saying something respecting the Prophets in general. This, then, I purpose to do now ; and *that* as briefly as may be consistent to make the subject at all clear, under these *seven* heads. 1st. Why the prophetic books are called so. 2dly. The different kinds of prophets mentioned in the Scriptures. 3dly. The situation of the prophets, and their manner of living. 4thly. The nature of their inspiration. 5thly. The collection of their writings, and mode of delivering their pro-

phesies. 6thly. The prophetic language ; and 7thly, the number and order of the prophetic books.

* 1st, Then, this portion of the Scriptures is called *prophetical*, because it chiefly consists of predictions, or foretellings, of future events ; though many passages of both history and doctrine are scattered through the writings of the *Prophets*, as there are, also, many prophecies in those books which are more strictly historical. The writers of these books are, by way of distinction, called *Prophets*, that is, persons raised up and inspired by God to be his ministers among his people the Israelites. St. Paul says, Heb. i. 1, “ God,”—“ at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto the fathers by the prophets.” And St. Peter says, 2 Ep. i. 21, “ Prophecy came not of old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” In the earliest ages of the world some were raised up who sustained this high character as Enoch, Noah, and others, *before* the giving of the law ; but, beginning with Moses, and going on to Malachi, (which is, perhaps the most correct way of reckoning), we find a line of prophets, who flourished in a continued succession for a space of more than one thousand years ; all confirming the authority of those who went before ; assisting in the same designs ; uniting in one spirit to deliver the same doctrines, and to foretell the same blessings to mankind ; labouring to bring the people to observe their instructions ; and denouncing the severest judgments against such as continued disobedient, or treated their divine commission with neglect or contempt.

* This Discourse is chiefly an abridgment of the same subjects in Horne's Introd. Vol. IV. p. 153, &c. and 173, &c.

2. We are to consider, *secondly*, the different kind of Prophets mentioned in the Scriptures. To these messengers of heaven, frequent reference is made in various parts of the sacred writings. The term, *Prophet*, indeed, is of general signification. It was applied by the heathens to all persons who were supposed to be concerned in divine things; and, agreeably to this notion, St. Paul, in his Epistle to Titus, i. 12, when quoting a passage from a profane *poet*, calls him a *prophet*, because the heathens supposed their *poets* to be *inspired*. In the historical books of the Old Testament we meet with frequent notice of “the schools of the Prophets,” these appear to have been places, where religious truths or the divine laws, were particularly taught. The scholars in these schools were not, strictly speaking, all of them *prophets*; though God bestowed upon *some* of them the spirit of prophecy, or of foretelling future events. (2 Kings ii. 3.) But, farther, in the Old Testament, the prophets are spoken of, as “holy men of God,” as “seers,” and as “prophets,” in the highest sense of the word. The first term, “holy men of God,” seems to have been sometimes applied to men of great piety, who diligently studied the divine law, as given by Moses; who firmly believed in the predictions of good and evil that should attend the people of Israel according to their conduct; who observed the character of the times in which they lived; and who might be able to see the natural and unavoidable consequences of particular actions, without the necessity of immediate inspiration. These “men of God,” however, received peculiar communications upon certain great occasions. They were divinely appointed to execute some important commissions, and to foretell events which were not in

the ordinary course of things, and far beyond the reach of human knowledge. It was *this*, which, sometimes, gave them the title of *seers*. The higher class of *Prophets* were those who foretold important events that were to take place at a distant time, which no human sagacity could foresee, and which were most opposite to the natural conceptions, or general expectations of mankind, as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and those called the lesser Prophets.

3dly. The *Prophets* were the philosophers, divines, instructors, and guides of the Hebrews in piety and virtue. These holy men were the bulwarks of religion against the impiety of princes, the wickedness of individuals, and every kind of immorality. Their lives, persons, and discourses were alike instructive and prophetic. Raised up by God to be witnesses of his presence, and living monuments of his will, the events that happened to them were, frequently, predictions of what was about to befall the Hebrew nation. Although the Prophets possessed great authority in Israel, and were highly esteemed by pious sovereigns, who undertook no important affairs without consulting them, yet their way of life was laborious, and they were very poor, and greatly exposed to persecution and ill-treatment, from bad kings, and from those whose immoral practices they condemned. Yet, amid all this persecution, they despised dangers, torments and death; and, with wonderful intrepidity, attacked whatever was contrary to the law and worship of Jehovah, despising worldly honours, riches, and favours, with astonishing disinterestedness. They generally lived retired, in some country place, and in societies, or colleges, where they and their disciples were employed in

prayer, in study and in labour. Thus Elisha was plowing when Elijah called him to the prophetic office, (1 Kings xix. 19, 20.); and the scholars, or sons of the prophets, who lived under the direction of Elijah and Elisha, made their own dwellings, for which they cut down the timber that was necessary. (2 Kings vi. 1—4.) Their clothing was conformable to the simplicity of their life. Elijah was clothed with skins, and wore a leather girdle about his loins. (2 Kings, i. 8.) Isaiah wore sackcloth, (xx. 2.) which was sometimes made of flax, and sometimes of hair, and which was the ordinary habit of the prophets. They were allowed to marry; for Samuel had children, and the Scriptures mention the wives of several of them. (Isaiah viii. 3. Ezek. xxiv. 18. Hosea i. 2.)

4thly. Great difference of opinion has prevailed respecting the nature, extent, continuance, and different degrees of inspiration which the prophets possessed. But, not to enter into any useless discussions, we may remark, that the communication between God and man is by *prayer*, by the *Word of God*, and by his *works*: in old times, it was, also, by the *prophets*, and, before them, by the *Angel of the Lord*, and the proper *signs of the divine presence*. Mankind, at first, consulted God by *prayers* and *sacrifices* at his *altars*. After the giving of the Law from mount Sinai, and the establishment of the priesthood, we find *three* modes of communicating the divine will mentioned in the Old Testament, (1.) *The Shekinah*,—(2.) *The Urim and Thummim*,—and (3.) Revelation by *Visions* and *Dreams*, or (4.) by *Inspiration*.

(1.) The *Shekinah* was the sitting, or dwelling, of God between the Cherubim, on the mercy-seat, or

cover of the ark, (Psalm lxxx. 1. and xcix. 1.) as a *great light* ; whence He delivered his answers in a distinguishable voice. (Exod. xxv. 22., xxix. 42., Numb. vii. 89.)

(2.) *The Urim and Thummim*. These two words signify *light* and *perfection* ; but *what* this was is not now known : it was something upon the breast-plate of the High Priest, (Exod. xxviii. 30.) which was to be consulted upon all great occasions, and answers were returned by some visible signification of the divine will.

(3.) Another mode of revealing the divine will was by *visions* and *dreams*. Of this we have many instances, as Abraham's, (Gen. xv. 12—15.) Jacob's, (Gen. xxviii. 12.) Abimelech's, (Gen. xx. 3.) those of Joseph and of Pharaoh and his servants, (Gen. xxxvii. 5., xl. 5., xli. 1.) and, also, that of Nebuchadnezzar, (Dan. ii. 1.) respecting the fate of many kingdoms. All these were worthy of the divine interference, and carried the evidence of their divine original by the revelations they made, and the strong impressions they left upon the mind.

(4.) But the most frequent of these extraordinary communications of the designs of God, and of his will, was by his *Prophets*, whom he *inspired* with that knowledge which was necessary for the instruction of his people in every age ; but, more especially, for the preservation of true religion among the Jews only, of all the nations of the earth, and “ chiefly,” as St. Paul says, “ because that unto them were committed the oracles of God,” (Rom. iii. 2.)—those oracles which contained the gracious promise of the Messiah.

“ In all the cases here described, the prophets could not, without doubting the clearest evidence,

distrust the truth of the revelations which they received; and, with respect to *us, we* have ample reason, from a general consideration of their writings, to be convinced, that their *inspiration* was accompanied with sufficient characters to distinguish it from the dreams of enthusiasm, or the visions of fancy."

5thly. As to the collection of their writings, and the mode of announcing, or publishing, their prophecies, the early prophets committed nothing to writing; their predictions being chiefly of a temporary nature, are inserted in the historical books, together with their fulfilment. Such appears to have been the case with Elijah, Elisha, Michaiiah, and others; but those who were gifted with the Spirit of Prophecy in its most exalted sense, and were commissioned to utter predictions, the accomplishment of which was as yet far distant, were directed to write them, or cause them to be written, in a book, and witnessed. (compare Isaiah viii. 1, 2. xxx. 8. Jeremiah xxx. 2. xxxvi. 2. 28. Ezekiel xliii. 11. Habakkuk ii. 2, &c.) The predictions, thus written down, were carefully preserved, under a conviction that they contained important truths, thereafter to be more fully revealed, which were to receive their accomplishment at the appointed times. It was, also, the office of the Prophets to commit to writing the history of the Jews, (1 Chron. xxix. 29. 2 Chron. xii. 15. xiii. 22. xx. 34. xxvi. 22. xxxii. 32.); and it is on this account, that, in the Jewish classing of the books of the Old Testament, we find several historical books placed among the prophets. Throughout their writings the utmost plainness and sincerity prevail. They record the idolatries of the nation, and foretell the judgments of God which were to

befall the Jews, in consequence of their forsaking his worship and service, and do not conceal, or gloss over, the crimes and misconduct of their best princes. They write like men, who had no regard to any thing, but *truth* and *the glory of God*.

The *manner* in which the prophets delivered their predictions varied according to circumstances. Sometimes they uttered them aloud in a public place; and it is in allusion to this practice, that Isaiah is commanded to “cry aloud, spare not, lift up his voice like a trumpet, and shew the people of God their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.” (Isaiah lviii. 1.) Sometimes their predictions were put upon the gates of the temple, where they might be generally read, (Jeremiah vii. 2.); but, upon important occasions, when it was necessary to rouse the fears of a disobedient people, and to recall them to repentance, the prophets, as objects of universal attention, appear to have walked about publicly in sackcloth, and with every outward mark of humiliation and sorrow. They then adopted extraordinary modes of expressing their convictions of impending wrath, and endeavoured to awaken the apprehensions of their countrymen, by the most striking *emblems* of threatened punishment. Thus, Jeremiah made *bonds* and *yokes*, and put them on his neck (Jeremiah xxvii.), strongly to represent the subjection that God would bring on the nations whom Nebuchadnezzar should subdue. Isaiah, likewise, walked, *naked*, that is without the upper rough garment of the prophet, and barefoot (Isaiah xx.), as a sign of the distress that awaited the Egyptians. So, Jeremiah broke the potter’s vessel (xix.); and Ezekiel publicly removed his household goods

from the city, more forcibly to represent, by these actions, some like calamities ready to fall on nations who were the objects of God's wrath.

Sometimes the prophets were commanded to seal and shut up their prophecies, that the originals might be preserved until they were accomplished, and then compared with the event. (Isaiah viii. 16. Jeremiah xxxii. 14. Daniel viii. 26. and xii. 4.) It seems (1 Samuel x. 25.) to have been customary for the prophets to place their writings in the tabernacle, or to lay them up before the Lord. And there is a tradition, that all the books were put into the side of the ark. It is certain, that the writings of the ancient prophets were carefully preserved during the captivity, and they are frequently referred to, and quoted, by the later prophets.

6thly. We are to consider, next, the *language* and *figures* used by the prophets.

Their style is highly poetical and sublime, full of figures, or similitudes, with frequent allusions to customs with which we are not acquainted. They speak much by *allegories* and *parables*.

The Prophets, for the most part, borrow their *figures* from *nature*. Some of the most common are the sun, moon and stars,—darkness, light, fire and air,—dew, showers and rivers,—storms and tempests,—forests, rocks and hills,—beasts, birds and fishes. They borrow not a few of their figures from the *occupations* of husbandmen, shepherds, vine-dressers, fishers and builders,—and from various *customs* at marriages, funerals and mourning.—They, likewise, borrow their images from *religion*, and things pertaining to it, from the temple and its furniture, ceremonial laws and sacrifices;—and several images are taken from *sacred history*, from the chaos and

creation,—from the fall of man and angels, the flood, and Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan.

These have all their particular signification, as the sun, moon and stars, mean kings, queens and men in great authority;—stately trees, as cedars, oaks and fir-trees, signify, also, kings, rulers and men in power;—briers and thorns mean the lower orders when in a discontented and troublesome state,—high mountains and lofty hills, are kingdoms, states and cities;—great earthquakes and shakings, mean commotions and overthrow of kingdoms;—light and darkness are figures of prosperity and adversity, knowledge and ignorance, joy and sorrow;—dew, gentle showers, and still-running waters, represent the blessings of the gospel;—heavy rains, floods and torrents, winds, fire and hail, are heavy judgments and ruin;—all beasts, birds and fishes of prey, are emblems of oppressors, tyrants and conquerors:—Lebanon is the image of something noble, or great, Carmel of fruitfulness and comeliness;—a vine and vineyard, are the church of God;—marriage the covenant of God, adultery departure from God to idols; virgins are cities never conquered; the daughter of a city is the suburbs, or lesser cities,—ships of Tarshish means commercial people; by the islands is meant those countries they traded with by sea;—by the earth is generally meant the land of Israel: and places are said to be east or west, north or south, as they stand with respect to Jerusalem;—a day is put for a year; and the latter day means the day of Christ.

7thly. We are to consider the number and order of the prophetic books. The prophets are sixteen in number; and, in all modern editions of the Bible, they are usually divided into two classes, namely the

greater Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel; who were thus called from the size of their books, not because they possessed greater authority than the others, and the *lesser* prophets, containing the twelve remaining ones; these prophecies were anciently written in *one volume* by the Jews, lest any of them should be lost, some of their writings being very short.

Much of the obscurity, or difficulty, which hangs over the prophetic writings may be removed by reading them in *the order of time* in which they were, probably, written; and, though the *precise* time in which some of the prophets delivered their predictions, cannot, perhaps, be traced in every instance, yet an order sufficiently correct may be made out. They may be divided, 1st, into those who flourished before the Jews were carried captive to Babylon, these are Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum and Zephaniah. 2dly, those who flourished near to, and during, the captivity in Babylon, these are Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel, Obadiah, and Ezekiel; and 3dly, those who flourished after the return of the Jews from Babylon, these were Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

We have already considered all the Prophets, excepting Isaiah, who, though the *fifth* in the order of *time*, yet his prophecies are placed *first*, principally on account of the loftiness and importance of his predictions; and, partly, also, because the book is larger than all the twelve lesser prophets put together. *The church*, indeed, in the course of her Sunday lessons, takes Isaiah the *last* of the Prophets; but it is in order to bring him at the season of *Advent*, because he treats so largely and particularly of *Christ, the Messiah*, so much so, that his *prophecy* has rather

the appearance of *history*, on which account he has been called *the Evangelical Prophet*, and *the fifth Evangelist*. The first lessons are, now, taken from Isaiah for twelve Sundays, and for Christmas-day, and the first lesson in the afternoon of Good Friday besides, so that there are more Sunday and *high-day* lessons taken from this book, than from any other.

Concerning the family of Isaiah, nothing certain is known, except what he himself tells us, i. 1, that he was the son of Amos, and prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. There is a tradition that he was of the royal family, and that his father Amoz, or Amos, (not the same as the prophet of that name) was the son of Joash, and, consequently, brother of Uzziah king of Judah. He lived to at least the 15th or 16th year of Hezekiah; which makes the shortest term of his prophetic office to be about 48 years. Though some have supposed that he lived into the reign of Manasseh, and was put to death by him, by being "sawn asunder," to which it is thought that St. Paul alludes, Heb. xi. 37.

He lived at the same time with the Prophets Amos, Hosea, Joel and Micah.

The name of *Isaiah* is, in some measure, descriptive of his high character, since it signifies *the Salvation-of-Jehovah*, and, therefore, was, with great propriety, given to him who foretold the advent of the Messiah, through whom "*all flesh shall see the salvation of God*." (Isaiah xl. 5. Luke iii. 6. Acts iv. 12.) Two of his sons are mentioned in his prophecy, who were types, or figurative pledges, of God's assurance; and their names and actions were intended to awaken a religious attention in the persons whom they were thus commissioned to

address and to instruct. Thus *Shear-jashub*, vii. 3, signifies, “*a remnant shall return*,” and shewed that the captives, who should be carried to Babylon, should return thence after a certain time; and *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*, viii. 1, 3, signifies “*make speed (or, run swiftly) to the spoil*,” implying that the kingdoms of Israel and Syria should, in a short time, be ravaged.

The object of Isaiah's prophecies is three-fold, namely, 1. To detect, display, reprove, and condemn the sins of the Jewish people especially, and, also, the iniquities of the ten tribes of Israel, and the abominations of many Gentile nations; denouncing the severest judgments against all sorts and degrees of persons, whether Jews, or Gentiles.

2dly. To invite persons of every rank and condition, both Jews and Gentiles, to repentance and reformation, by many promises of pardon and mercy: And it is worthy of remark, that no such promises are intermingled with the denouncings of divine vengeance against *Babylon*, although they occur in the threatenings against every other people.

3dly. To comfort all the truly pious (in the midst of all the calamities and judgments denounced against the wicked) with prophetic promises of the true Messiah, which, as I have already observed, seem almost to give before hand the gospel history, so clearly do they describe the divine character of Christ*, his miracles†, his peculiar qualities and virtues‡,

* vii. 14. compared with Matt. i. 18—23. and Luke i. 27—35; vi. ix. 6. xxxv. 4. xl. 5. 9, 10. xlii. 6—8. lxi. 1. compared with Luke iv. 18.; lxii. 11. lxiii. 1—4.

† xxxv. 5, 6.

‡ xi. 2, 3. xl. 11. xliii. 1—3.

his rejection * and sufferings for our sins †, his death, burial ‡, and victory over death §, and, lastly, his final glory ||, and the establishment, increase ¶, and perfection ** of his kingdom. It is impossible to reflect on these, and on the whole chain of his illustrious prophecies, and not to be sensible that they furnish the most powerful evidence in support of Christianity.

[This prophet, says Bishop Lowth, abounds in such transcendent excellencies, that he may be properly said to afford the most perfect model of prophetic poetry. He is at once elegant and sublime, forcible and ornamented; he unites energy with copiousness, and dignity with variety. In his sentiments there is uncommon elevation and majesty; in his imagery, the utmost propriety, elegance, dignity and diversity; in his language uncommon beauty and energy; and, notwithstanding the obscurity of his subjects, a surprising degree of clearness and simplicity. Isaiah, also, greatly excels in all the graces of method, order, connection, and arrangement: though, in asserting this, we must not forget the nature of the prophetic impulse, which bears away the mind with irresistible violence, and frequently in rapid transitions from near to remote objects, from human to divine: we must,

* vi. 9—12. compared with Mark xiii. 14.; vii. 14, 15. liii. 3.

† i. 6. liii. 4—11.

‡ liii. 8—9.

§ xxv. 8. liii. 10, 12.

|| xlix. 7. 22, 53. lii. 13—15. liii. 4, 5.

¶ ii. 2—4. ix. 7. xlii. 4. xlvi. 13.

** ix. 2. 7. xi. 4—10. xvi. 5. xxix. 18—24. xxxii. 1. xl. 4, 5. xlix. 9—13. li. 3—6. lii. 6—10. lv. 1—3. lix. 16—21. lx. lxi. 1—5. lxv. 25.

likewise, be careful in remarking the limits of particular predictions, since, as they are now extant, they are often improperly connected, without any marks of discrimination; which injudicious arrangement, on some occasions, creates almost insuperable difficulties.

Bishop Lowth has selected the XXXIVth and XXXVth chapters of this prophet, as a specimen of the poetic style in which he delivers his predictions, and has illustrated, at some length, the various beauties which eminently distinguish the simple, regular, and perfect poem contained in those chapters. But the grandest specimen of his poetry is presented in the XIVth chapter, which is one of the most sublime odes occurring in the Bible, and contains the noblest personifications to be found in the records of poetry. “If I may be indulged in the free declaration of my own sentiments on this occasion,” says Bishop Lowth, “I do not know a single instance in the whole compass of Greek and Roman poetry, which, in every excellence of composition, can be said to equal, or even to approach, it.”]

The book of the prophet Isaiah, as it stands in our Bibles, is divided into 66 chapters, of which the first five are generally supposed to have been delivered in the reign of Uzziah, the VIth in the reign of Jotham, the VIIth to the end of the XIVth, in the reign of Ahaz, and the remainder in that of Hezekiah. It may be conveniently divided into *six* parts, or sections, each containing a number of discourses, delivered by the prophet to the various nations, or people, whom he was commissioned to address.

Part the Ist, contained in the Ist, to the end of the Vth chapter, gives a general description of the

state and condition of the Jews, in the several periods of their history ; the publication and success of the Gospel, and the coming of Messiah to judgment. The prophecies contained in this section, were delivered, as I have already stated, in the reign of Uzziah king of Judah.

Part the II^d, the VIth, to the end of the XIIth chapter, contains the prophecies delivered in the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz.

Part the III^d, the XIIIth, to the end of the XXIII^d chapter, contains various predictions against the Babylonians, Assyrians, Philistines, and other nations with which the Jews had any intercourse ; these predictions are contained in *nine* prophetic poems, or discourses. The first two of these, which contain the prophecies against the Babylonians, Assyrians, and Philistines, in the XIIIth and XIVth, were, probably, delivered in the reign of Ahaz, and the rest of the book in that of Hezekiah.

Part the IVth, the XXIVth, to the end of the XXXVth chapter, contains a prophecy of the great calamities that should befall the people of God, his merciful preservation of a remnant of them, and of their restoration to their country, of their conversion to the Gospel, and the destruction of Anti-Christ.

Part the Vth, XXXVI, to the end of chapter XXXIX, comprises the historical part of the book.

Part the VIth, chapter XL, to the end of chapter LXVI, or the end of the book, contains a series of 12 prophecies, or discourses, delivered, in all probability, towards the close of Hezekiah's reign.

We have, thus, cleared the way, by remarks upon the prophets at large, and by a general view of the prophecy of Isaiah : we may, now, consider the contents of the particular chapters, and begin with the

first lessons for this day, the 1st and 11d chapters; but the time will oblige me to be very brief.

The 1st chapter contains a severe remonstrance against the ingratitude, inclinations to idolatry, want of inward piety, and other corruptions, prevailing among the Jews of that time, intermixed with powerful exhortations to repentance, grievous threatenings to the impenitent, and gracious promises of better times, when the nation shall have been reformed by the just judgments of God. After the introduction, in the 1st verse, he begins, in the words I have chosen for my text, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

It is *our* parts to consider how far this reproof may belong to *us*. The animals around us, if we feed them, and use them kindly, will know us, and regard us, and love us, and yield us service in their several ways: and this is done with only animal sensation and affection to guide them. Do *we*, endowed with *reason* and *religion*, return *as good* a service to *God*? Do *we* *fear* and love *him*? If not, the *cow* in our stalls, and the *dog* upon our hearths, shall rise up in judgment and condemn us. How many are there, who never once thank God for the habitation, food and clothing which he vouchsafes us, who offer him no service, who never enter his Church! Of those who *do*, how many are there who bring "vain oblations," who bring the offerings of their *lips*, and not of their HEARTS!

The 11d chapter contains only part of a prophecy, or discourse. The 1st, to the end of the 5th verse,

is foretold the preaching of the Gospel, and the conversion of the Gentile world. The remainder of the chapter is a prediction of the punishment of the unbelieving Jews, for their idolatrous practices, for their self-confidence, and distrust in God ; and, likewise, the destruction of idolatry, in consequence of the establishment of Messiah's kingdom.

[At the 17th and 18th verses it is said, "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day : and the idols he shall utterly abolish." Now, "Idolatry," says Wogan *, "is the reverse, and direct opposite, to Christianity. To destroy this was the great end of Christ's advent, or coming into the world. But except he were God, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, his religion would be so far from destroying idolatry, that it would only be a more refined and dangerous species of it. The prophet, therefore, after describing the humbling effects it would have upon the hearts of all sincere converts, concludes all (that so he might acquit the worship of Christ from all charge of idolatry) with this positive assertion, that it would prove the most effectual means of putting an end to all false and idolatrous worship : *The idols he shall utterly abolish.*—The like conclusion we meet with in the apostle St. *John* (1 Ep. v. 21.) where having affirmed, that Jesus Christ is the true God, and eternal Life, he immediately subjoins, and closes all with this advice, 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols †.'"]

"How thankfully should we improve the light and advantages afforded us by the Gospel ! This prophecy has been accomplished, Christianity has been preached, established and secured against

* Vol. I. p. 31.

† See also Jones on the Trinity, p. 11. § xxii.

oppression. *This nation* hath 'flowed' to it: we were once darkness, but now walk in the light of the Lord. What a delightful idea of religion! We here see the end of ordinances, and what should be our view in attending them. We should come to learn in order to practise, to help each other forward, excite one another to a Christian behaviour, and 'provoke one another to love and to good works*.'"

* Orton, Vol. V. p. 162.

SERMON LI.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.—ISAIAH III—XXIV.

CALAMITIES THREATENED—THE VINEYARD—WOES DENOUNCED
—APPOINTMENT OF ISAIAH—THE LORD ON HIS THRONE—
ISAIAH'S LIPS PURIFIED—THE TRINITY IN UNITY—BLIND-
NESS IN JUDAH—THE MESSIAH—GOSPEL TIMES—THE CON-
VERSION OF THE JEWS—THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON,
&c.—A REMNANT LEFT.

ISAIAH V. 3, 4.

And, now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

IN my last discourse, I gave you some account of the Prophets in general and their writings, and some more particular remarks upon Isaiah and his prophecy, stating the general design and contents of it, and considered the first two chapters, which were the first lessons for the day, as far as my pressing time would allow. The first lessons for this day are the Vth and the XXIVth chapters; I have, therefore, to begin at the IIIrd chapter, and consider, as the time will allow, to the end of the XXIVth.

The IIIrd chapter is a continuation of the prophecy begun in the IIrd, and which is carried on to the end of the IVth. Indeed, it would have been a better

division to have ended the II^d chapter with the 21st verse, and begun the III^d chapter with the 22^d verse, “Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils : for wherein is he to be accounted of?” It, then, goes on, “*For*, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah, the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,” and so forth. This chapter contains a prophecy of the calamities that should come upon the Jews in the decline of their state; particularly of their captivity by the Babylonians, and, probably, also, of their destruction by the Romans. In the first part of the chapter, to the end of the 9th verse, is painted, in very strong colours, the miseries, the exquisite miseries, of a sinful people, a people glorying in their sins, suffering by famine both of bread and water, and seditions, and a want of a powerful government to controul them. At the 10th verse, God says, “Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him : for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked ! it shall be ill with him : for the reward of his hands shall be given him.” This is a command to the priests and Levites to say thus in their *sermons* to the people.

The 16th, to the end of the 24th verse, is an awful denunciation against the daughters of Zion for their haughtiness, wantonness, luxury, and delicacy. The 1st verse of the IVth chapter should more properly have been joined to the III^d, as a part of the same threatening, “And, in that day, seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel : only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach ;” notwithstanding the natural reserve of the sex, they shall solicit to be married, and be content to main-

tain themselves. This must have been particularly grating to women of so much delicacy, luxury and pride.

At the 2d verse of the IVth chapter, the prophet proceeds to foretell the glory of Messiah's kingdom.

The Vth chapter, the first lesson at this morning's service, is a prophecy, or discourse, by itself, being unconnected with either the former, or the following one. The subject is nearly the same with that of the Ist chapter. Like that, it contains a general reproof of the Jews for their ingratitude, which is beautifully described in a parable of a vineyard, from the 1st, to the end of the 7th verse. The people, or Church, of God are, frequently, in Scripture, compared to a *vine* and a *vineyard*, particularly in the lxxxth Psalm, and in this place. God represents himself as doing every thing for it proper for its cultivation ; and, then, says, in the words I have chosen for my text, " And, now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it ? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth *grapes*, brought it forth *wild grapes* ?"

And, thus, in these days, every minister's church, and his parish, and his people, are *his vineyard*, he is, under God, *the husbandman*. And, have not ministers, too, often,—making allowance for infirmities on *both* sides,—cause, grievous cause, to make complaints of *their* vineyards ? After labouring for years, preaching the Gospel " in season and out of season," (2 Tim. iv. 2.) they look for *grapes*, pleasant and wholesome fruit—and they see little besides *wild grapes*, or poisonous berries. My brethren who hear me,—and, oh ! that they could hear who are absent

in vanity and sin!—beware lest God do to you, as he did to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah: yes, he speaks to *every* unfruitful vineyard, “I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will, also, command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it,” my *blessing* shall not be upon it.

The 8th verse, to the end of the 25th, consists of *woes* denounced against those who are *covetous*, against those “that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till wine inflame them.” And the woe is taken up again, verse 22, against “them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink,” who drink a great deal without being disordered, and boast of it as an accomplishment, and who “mingle strong drink,” who are not contented with their “strong drink,” but must “mingle” it, and add *spirits* to it. Woe is denounced, verse 18, “unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin, as it were, with a cart rope;” who set themselves seriously and resolutely about it, and encourage others in it, and set “the Holy One of Israel” at defiance. At verse 20, the woe is “unto them that call” what is “evil, good, and” what is “good, evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.” “Unto them,” also, “that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight;” and, so, despise the prophet’s instructions. Again, woe is denounced against them “which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him,” by condemning and punishing him. This *woe* should, likewise be well considered by those *counsellors* who will undertake any cause for

money ; and who boast how they can *hum* a jury, and *bother* a witness, till he does not know whether he speaks truth or falsehood, and contradicts himself.

In consequence of these iniquities, the prophet says, that the Lord of Hosts, the Holy One of Israel “ will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth ; and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly ;” he will collect the Chaldeans and the Romans with the utmost ease, as shepherds gather their sheep by whistling. The images used in the remainder of the chapter to describe the approach of the invading army are uncommonly animated and awful.

The VIth chapter begins what I called the second part, or section, of the prophecies of Isaiah, namely, those delivered in the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz, going on to the end of the XIIth chapter. The VIth chapter contains the vision and prophecy of Isaiah in the reign of Jotham. As this chapter seems to contain a solemn appointment of Isaiah to his office, it is supposed by many of his interpreters to be the *first* in order of his prophecies. But this may not be the case, because Isaiah is said, in the general title to his book, to have prophesied in the reign of Uzziah ; and this is, probably, a new appointment, to introduce, with the greater solemnity, a general declaration of the whole course of God’s dispensation towards his people, and the fates of the nation, —events which are *still depending*, and will not be fully accomplished till the final restoration of Israel. This new and solemn appointment was, probably, intended to impress the prophet’s mind with an awful reverence of the majesty of Jehovah, to excite him to activity and perseverance in his work, and to

encourage him amid the unsuccessfulness of his ministry. He says, "I saw, also," that is, either in a dream, or in a vision when awake, "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," the *Shekinah*, or glory of the Lord, which we are told, John. xii. 41, was CHRIST, "and his train" or skirts, or flowing robe, the spreading and overflowing of the divine glory, "filled the temple." The imagery is taken in general from royal majesty as displayed by the monarchs of the East, for the prophet could not represent the incomprehensible and unspeakable presence of God by any other than sensible and earthly images. The particular scenery of it is taken from the temple. The veil is removed, and God is represented as seated on his throne above the ark in the most holy place, where the glory appeared above the cherubim, surrounded by his attendant ministers: "each one had six wings, with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another," alternately expressing their transports of zeal and joy, "and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory;" his perfections now shine in his works and providence; but it shall be more so in gospel times. "And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke," in token of God's indignation against his people. This glorious vision might be compared with that of Ezekiel, in his Ist chapter, and that of St. John, in the ivth chapter of his Revelation: but the time will not allow me *.

"Then said I," says the prophet, "Woe is me! for I am undone," or, I am struck dumb, "because I

* See Lowth's *Isaiah* upon the place, and Horne's *Introduction*, Vol. IV. p. 178.

am a man of unclean lips." I am a polluted, sinful creature, unfit to be employed in any service for God, "and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of Hosts." I have seen him in all his splendour and purity, appearing as a judge. "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with his hands from off the altar:" (for the prophet, it seems, stood by the altar of burnt offerings, at the entrance of the temple,) "And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged," this is a sign that thy guilt is pardoned, and that a commission is given thee to be a preacher and a reprover to this people.

"Also," the prophet proceeds, "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *Us*?" This is one of those passages which, as I observed, in my discourse on Septuagesima Sunday, On the Creation, and in my discourse on Trinity Sunday, on the Holy Trinity, intimates that there are *more persons* than *one* in the *Godhead*. Indeed, this chapter affords a powerful argument, considered with others, in support of the doctrine of THE TRINITY IN UNITY. Here is THE LORD, THE LORD OF HOSTS, sitting on his throne; he makes use of the terms *I* and *Us*, expressive at once of *unity* and *plurality*, that is, of there being *one* and *more than one*, and the seraphim sing, "Holy, Holy, Holy," that is thrice holy, "is the Lord of Hosts," or each of the *three persons* constituting THE LORD OF HOSTS is HOLY; and St. John, in his xiith chapter, the 36th, to the end of the 41st verse, tells us, that "the Lord," whose "glory" Esaias, or Isaiah, "saw," was JESUS CHRIST. The Lord of Hosts, then, or Jehovah, con-

sists of Three Persons of equal glory and co-eternal majesty *, and Jesus Christ is one of these, who condescended to leave his glory in heaven, to become man, and suffer death for us, that he might redeem us to heaven, to live forever in the presence of this unspeakable glory.

But, to return to Isaiah, he says, "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us?" This he asks, not for information, but that Isaiah might willingly offer himself. He proceeds, "Then said I, Here am I, send me;" I am very willing to go, now that my incapacity is removed. "And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye, indeed, but understand not; and see ye, indeed, but perceive not;" that is, though I give you the means of instruction, and lay before you things most worthy of your seeing and hearing, yet, by my prophet, I foretell, that ye will not be affected with them. He goes on, "Make the heart of this people fat," stupid and hardened, that is, declare that it will be so; be not wanting to instruct and reprove them, though this should be the consequence; "and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed," or pardoned. "Then said I, Lord, how long?" that is, "how long" shall this blindness sent in judgment, continue? "And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate; and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land;" that is, till utter destruction come upon them

* Athanasian Creed.

as a nation ; referring to their destruction, first, by the Chaldeans, and, afterwards, by the Romans, forty years after the time of Christ ; for this prophecy is expressly applied by Christ to the Jews in his time, Matt. xiii. 13—15. ; by St. John in his Gospel, xii. 38—41. ; by St. Paul, Acts xxviii. 25—27, and in his Epistle to the Romans xi. 8. The prophet goes on. “ But, yet, in it shall be a tenth,” or tithe of the inhabitants, “ and it shall return” to God, “ and shall be eaten,” that is, be acceptable to him as the tithe which was eaten by the priest, and is called meat in his house : “ as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves ;” like a tree that seems withered and dead in winter, yet is alive, and shall sprout again : “ so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof,” that is, those who embrace the Gospel shall preserve the nation from utter ruin, and, at length, it shall flourish again ; so that the Jews shall never be entirely cast off, but in due time be numbered again among God’s people.

The VIIth chapter, the VIIIth, and to the end of the 7th verse of the IXth chapter, is another discourse, or prophecy. It begins with an historical account of the occasion of it, and is followed by a prediction (confirmed by a *sign*) of the ill success that should attend the designs of the Israelites and Syrians against Judah. That part of the chapter, (the VIIth,) beginning with the 10th verse, and ending with the 16th, is the first lesson at evening service on Christmas-day ; and will be considered more fully then ; it contains the promise of *Immanuel* to be born of a virgin.

To this succeeds a denunciation of the calamities that were to be brought upon the king and people of

Judah by the Assyrians, whom they had hired to assist them. These predictions and denunciations are repeated and confirmed in the VIIIth chapter, the 9th and 10th verses of which contain a general assurance, that all the designs of the enemies of God's people shall, in the end, be rendered of no effect; and the discourse concludes,—after various admonitions and threatenings, from the 11th verse of the VIIIth chapter, to the end of the 1st verse of the IXth chapter,—with an illustrious prophecy, ix. 2—7., in the first instance, perhaps, of the restoration of prosperity under Hezekiah; but, principally, of the manifestation of the Messiah, the transcendent dignity of his character, and the universality and eternal duration of his kingdom. This part, the 1st to the end of the 7th verse of the IXth chapter, is the first lesson, at morning service, on Christmas-day, and will be considered more fully in my discourse upon that occasion.

The 8th verse of the IXth chapter, to the end of the 4th verse of the Xth chapter, is another distinct prophecy, or discourse. It is addressed solely to the kingdom of Israel, and its subject is a denunciation of vengeance upon their enemies.

The 5th verse of the Xth chapter, to the end of the XIIth chapter, is another distinct prophecy. To the end of the XIth chapter it foretells the destruction of Sennacherib's army; and, according to Isaiah's usual method, he takes occasion, from the mention of a great temporal deliverance, by the destruction of the Assyrian host, to launch forth into a display of the spiritual deliverance of God's people, by the Messiah, to whom this prophecy relates, as may be seen, by referring to the Epistle

to the Romans, the XVth chapter, and the 12th verse. This XIth chapter is appointed as the first lesson, at evening service, on Whit-sunday, and gives a delightful representation of the manifold graces of the Spirit of the Lord and the blessedness of the perfecting of Gospel times, when “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb,” when the animosities in human nature shall be laid aside, and all shall be harmony and love.

The declaration, at the 11th verse, that “The Lord will again put forth his hand *the second time* to recover the remnant of his people that remaineth, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea,” did not receive, as far as we are informed, a *full, literal*, accomplishment in the return from Babylon; neither did that recorded in the XXXth and XXXIst chapters of Jeremiah, where, xxx. 3., the distinction between the captivity of *Israel* and of Judah, leads us to expect the return of Israel; an event which appears to us to be as yet to be accomplished. The Apostle, Romans xi. 26., quotes Isaiah lxix. 20. as referring to their *future* conversion, and thereby justifies our taking such a view of this, and other prophecies of a like kind; and affords great encouragement in the exertions which are now making to open the eyes of the Jews to believe in the Messiah whom their fathers crucified*.

The hymn in the XIIth chapter seems, by its whole tenor, as well as by many of its expressions, much better calculated for the use of the Christian,

* See Bickersteth's Practical Remarks on the Prophecies, p. 15.

than of the Jewish church, under any circumstances, or at any time that can be assigned; and the Jews themselves seem to have applied it to the times of the Messiah. We shall have occasion to speak of this again, the “drawing water from the wells of salvation,” mentioned in the 3d verse, in treating the LVth chapter.

The XIIIth chapter begins what I have called the *third* part, or section, of these prophecies, going on to the end of the XXIIIrd chapter. This part consists of *nine* distinct prophecies, or discourses, against the Babylonians, Assyrians, Philistines, and other nations with whom the Jews had any intercourse.

Discourse I. The first discourse is contained in the XIIIth chapter, and to the end of the 28th verse of the XIVth chapter. It foretells the destruction of Babylon by the Medes and Persians. It was, probably, delivered in the reign of Ahaz, about 200 years before its accomplishment. *The captivity* itself of the Jews at Babylon (which the prophet does not expressly foretell, but, supposes, in the spirit of prophecy, as what was actually to be effected) did not take place till about 130 years after this prophecy was delivered. And *the Medes*, who, xiii. 7., are mentioned as the principal agents in overturning this great monarchy, and releasing the Jews from their captivity, were, at this time, an inconsiderable people, forming only a province of the Assyrian empire. The latter part of this prophecy, xiv. 4—27., contains that sublime ode, or song, of which I spoke in my last, as being considered as the finest specimen of *poetry* in the world, either in ancient or in modern times. I would willingly consider the particulars of it, but the time

will not allow me *. How punctually this prophecy

* The *reader* will, no doubt, be gratified in turning his attention to it : Mr. Horne, in his Introduction, Vol. IV. p. 185, says, “ The prophet, after predicting the liberation of the Jews from their severe captivity in Babylon, and their restoration to their own country (verses 1—3), introduces a chorus of them, expressing their surprise and astonishment at the sudden downfall of Babylon, and the great reverse of fortune that had befallen the tyrant, who, like his predecessors, had oppressed his own, and harassed the neighbouring kingdoms. These oppressed kingdoms, or their rulers, are represented under the image of fir-trees and the cedars of Libanus, which is frequently used to express any thing in the political or religious world that is supereminently great and majestic : the whole earth shouts for joy ; the cedars of Libanus utter a severe taunt, and boast their security now he is no more, (verses 4—8.)

“ This is followed (9) by one of the boldest and most animated personifications of Hades, or the regions of the dead, that was ever executed in poetry. Hades excites his inhabitants, the shades of princes, and the departed spirits of monarchs. These illustrious shades rise at once from their couches as from their thrones¹ ; and advancing to the entrance of the cavern to meet the king of Babylon, they insult and deride him on being reduced to the same low state of impotence and dissolution with themselves, (10, 11.) The Jews now resume the speech (12) ; they address the king of Babylon as the morning-star fallen from heaven, as the first in splendour and dignity in the political world, fallen from his high state : they introduce him as uttering the most extravagant vaunts of his power and ambitious

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<sup>1</sup> “ The image of the dead,” so admirably described by the prophet, Bishop Lowth observes, “ is taken from their custom of burying, those at least of the higher rank, in large sepulchral vaults hewn in the rock. Of this kind of sepulchres there are remains at Jerusalem now extant ; and some that are said to be the sepulchres of the kings of Judah.” See Maundrell, p. 76. You are to form to yourself an idea of an immense subterraneous vault, a vast gloomy cavern, all round the sides of which there are cells to receive the dead bodies : here the deceased monarchs lie in a distinguished sort of state suitable to their former rank, each on his own couch, with his arms beside him, his sword at his head, and the bodies of his chiefs and companions round about him. See Ezekiel xxxii. 27. On which place Sir John Chardin’s manuscript note is as follows :—“ En Mingrelie ils dorment tous leur épée sous leurs têtes, et leurs autres armes à leur côté ; et on les enterre de mesme, leurs armes posées de cette façon.” Bishop Lowth’s Translation of Isaiah, vol. ii. p. 121.



was fulfilled, we may read in Daniel v.; and the designs in his former glory; these are strongly contrasted, in the close, with his present low and abject condition. (13—15.)

“ Immediately follows a different scene, and a most happy image, to diversify the same subject, and give it a new turn and additional force. Certain persons are introduced, who light upon the corpse of the king of Babylon, cast out and lying naked upon the bare ground, among the common slain, just after the taking of the city, covered with wounds, and so disfigured, that it is some time before they know him. They accost him with the severest taunts, and bitterly reproach him with his destructive ambition, and his cruel usage of the conquered; which have deservedly brought upon him this ignominious treatment, so different from that which those of his rank usually meet with, and which shall cover his posterity with disgrace. (16—20.)

“ To complete the whole, God is introduced, declaring the fate of Babylon, the utter extirpation of the royal family, and the total desolation of the city; the deliverance of his people, and the destruction of their enemies; confirming the irreversible decree by the awful sanction of his oath. (21—27.)

“ ‘How forcible,’ says Bishop Lowth, ‘is this imagery, how diversified, how sublime! how elevated the diction, the figures, the sentiments!—The Jewish nation, the cedars of Lebanon, the ghosts of departed kings, the Babylonish monarch, the travellers who find his corpse, and last of all JEHOVAH himself, are the characters which support this beautiful lyric drama. One continued action is kept up, or rather a series of interesting actions are connected together in an incomparable whole: this, indeed, is the principal and distinguished excellence of the sublime ode, and is displayed in its utmost perfection in this poem of Isaiah, which may be considered as one of the most ancient, and certainly one of the most finished, specimens of that species of composition which has been transmitted to us. The personifications here are frequent, yet not confused; bold, yet not improbable: a free, elevated, and truly divine spirit pervades the whole; nor is there any thing wanting in this ode to defeat its claim to the character of perfect beauty and sublimity. If, indeed, I may be indulged in the free declaration of my own sentiments on this occasion, I do not know a single instance, in the whole compass of Greek and Roman poetry, which, in every excellence of composition, can be said to equal, or even to approach it<sup>2</sup>.’ ”

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Lowth's Translation of Isaiah, vol. ii. p. 301. and also his Lectures on Hebrew Poetry, Lecture xiii. towards the close. Jahn, Introd. ad Vet. Fœd. p. 367.



successive testimonies of all travellers, to the present time, unanimously concur in stating Babylon to be utterly destroyed, so that even the place, where this wonder of the world once stood, cannot now be determined with any certainty.

Discourse 2. Chapter xiv. 29—32., contains severe prophetic denunciations against the Philistines, the accomplishment of which is recorded in 2 Kings xviii. 8.

Discourse 3. Chapter XV. XVI. is a prophecy against the Moabites : it was, probably, delivered in the first year of Hezekiah's reign ; and was fulfilled in the fourth year, when Shalmanezar invaded the kingdom of Israel.

Discourse 4. Chapter XVII. is a prophecy directed chiefly against Damascus, or the kingdom of Syria, with whose sovereign the king of Samaria, or Israel, had confederated against Jerusalem. It was delivered, probably, soon after the prophecies in the VIIth and VIIIth chapters, in the beginning of Ahab's reign. It was fulfilled (see 2 Kings xvi. 9.) by Tiglath-pilezer's taking Damascus, overrunning a very considerable part of the kingdom of Israel, and carrying a great number of the Israelites captives into Assyria ; and, in regard to Israel, this prediction was still more fully accomplished by the conquest of the kingdom, and the captivity of the people a few years after by Shalmanezar.

The last three verses of this chapter are a distinct prophecy, and contain a noble description of the formidable invasion and sudden overthrow of Sennacherib, which is given in the strongest terms and most expressive images, exactly suitable to the event.

Discourse 5. The prophecy in the XVIIIth chapter is called, in the head of the chapter in our Bibles,



“ Ethiopia is threatened,” while some commentators say it is directed against the Assyrians, and others that it refers to the Egyptians ; while some think that it is yet to be accomplished.

Discourse 6. Chapter XIX. XX. is a prophecy against Egypt, the conversion of whose inhabitants to the true religion is intimated in verses 18—25 of chapter XIX.

Discourse 7. Chapter XXI. 1—10. contains a second prophecy against Babylon, which was fulfilled by the taking of that city by the Medes and Persians.

The 11th and 12th verses are very obscure ; they relate to Edom, or Seir ; and

The last five verses contain a prophecy respecting Arabia, which was fulfilled within a year after its delivery.

Discourse 8. Chapter XXII. is a prophecy, 1—14, concerning the taking of Jerusalem ; 15—19., the captivity of Shebna ; and 20—22., the promotion of Eliakim. The invasion of Jerusalem here foretold is either that by the Assyrians under Sennacherib, or by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar ; or, perhaps, the prophet had *both* in view, namely, the invasion of the Chaldeans, 1—5., and that of the Assyrians, 8—11., as may be seen by comparing 2 Kings xxv. 4, 5. and 2 Chronicles xxxii. 2—5.

Discourse 9. Chapter XXIII. foretells the destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar. The 18th verse is supposed to predict the conversion of the Tyrians to Christianity. And that some of them were converted we see on reading Acts xxi. 3, 4.

Chapter XXIV., the first lesson at this evening’s service, begins what I have called the *fourth* part, or section, of this book, which goes on to the end of



chapter XXXV. It contains a prophecy of the great calamities which should befall the people of God, his merciful preservation of a remnant of them, and of their restoration to their country, of their conversion to the Gospel, and the destruction of Anti-Christ.

This *part* consists of *five* discourses, the first of which is contained in the XXIVth, the XXVth, and the XXVIth chapters. It was, probably, delivered in the beginning of Hezekiah's reign; but interpreters are not agreed, whether the desolation spoken of, in chapter XXIV., was that caused by the invasion of Shalmanezzer, by Nebuchadnezzar, or by the Romans, or whether it may have a view to all these three great desolations of the country. At the 22d verse, God promises to visit his people; and the glance at their future restoration, in the close of this chapter, leads the prophet to break out into a sublime and beautiful song of praise, arising more from the prospect of *future* mercies, than by the recollection of what is past.

The XXIVth chapter begins with a call to "Behold" that which is of awful concern to all people in every age, "Behold THE LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof." Whatever is done, whether in the way of *providence* or *judgment*, is done by THE LORD. The former part of the chapter sets forth the misery and consternation, which prevail in a luxurious and sinful land under the pressure of a siege. But it says, at the 13th verse, "When thus it shall be, in the midst of the land, among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree, and as the gleaning-grapes when the vintage is done," a remnant shall be left,



and these shall be serious and devout; “they shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea,” over which they have fled. “Wherefore,” adds the prophet, “glorify ye the Lord in the *fires*,” in the greatest distress and the heaviest afflictions, “even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea. From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs,” the dispersed people of God keep up and profess their religion, “even glory to the righteous,” that is, “the righteous” God.

That this is to be understood of CHRIST, the Son of God, will appear from sundry passages of Scripture, where THE RIGHTEOUS is used as one of his distinguishing titles. Thus LIII. 11. of this prophet, God the Father calls him “my righteous servant.” XLIV. 2. he is called *Jeshurun*, which signifies *righteous*. St. Peter, also, Acts iii. 14., calls him “the Holy One and the Just,” or *Righteous* [τὸν δίκαιον]. And this doxology to Christ, as one of the sacred persons in the blessed Trinity, is called *a new song*, because more particularly belonging to the Christian Church. The Christian doxology of “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,” was *a new song* to the Jew, but much more to the Gentiles: before the coming of Christ, the Jew gave glory to *God the Father*, but not to *God the Son*: the Gentiles gave glory to their idols only, and not to the Father, nor the Son. But, wherever the Gospel has prevailed, since the coming of Christ in the flesh, there glory to the Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, hath ever been the hymn of the Christian Church throughout the world \*.

\* See Wogan, Vol. I. p. 56.



He goes on to complain bitterly of the hypocrisy of the people, and to proclaim the evils which shall ensue, and says, "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in mount Zion, 'and in Jerusalem ;" that is, the divine perfections shall be so illustrated, that the brightness of them shall obscure the sun and moon, as they do the lesser lights, or shall obscure the great powers of the earth ; " and before his ancients gloriously ;" his priests and ancient servants, who saw the desolation of their country, shall see all the glory that shall be displayed in the destruction of these monarchies, in punishing the wicked, and sparing and restoring the righteous.

Let *us* lay these things seriously to heart, my brethren, and avoid the sins which brought destruction upon all these nations, that, should it please God to visit for them, *we* may be " as the gleanings when the vintage is done," and " lift up our voice and sing for the majesty of the Lord," the Holy, Blessed, and Glorious TRINITY, three persons in one Godhead, whose praise is to be sung by all the nations of the earth.



## SERMON LII.

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THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.—ISAIAH XXV—XXVIII.

PRAISE FOR MERCIES—THE GOSPEL FEAST—THE GENERAL RESURRECTION—GOD'S JUDGMENTS TEACHERS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS—AFFLICTION—ISRAEL TO BE GLEANED ONE BY ONE—THE SIN OF DRUNKENNESS—THE TEACHER TO GIVE PRECEPT UPON PRECEPT — THE CORNER STONE — MOCKERS — THE PLOUGHMAN.

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### ISAIAH XXVI. 1.

*In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah, We have a strong city, Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.*

IN my last discourse, I considered that part of the prophecies of Isaiah beginning at the III<sup>d</sup> chapter, and ending with the XXIV<sup>th</sup>. I observed, that the XXIV<sup>th</sup> chapter began what I had called the *fourth* part, or section, of the book, which goes on to the end of the XXXV<sup>th</sup> chapter, and which contains a prophecy of the great calamities which should befall the people of God, his merciful preservation of a remnant of them, and of their restoration to their country, of their conversion to the Gospel, and the destruction of Anti-Christ. I observed, also, that this part consists of *five* discourses, the *first* of which is contained in the XXIV<sup>th</sup>, XXV<sup>th</sup>, and XXVI<sup>th</sup> chapters. This prophecy was, probably, delivered in the beginning of the reign of Hezekiah; but interpreters are not agreed, whether the desolation, spoken of in the XXIV<sup>th</sup> chapter, was that caused



by the invasion of Shalmanezer, by Nebuchadnezzar, or by the Romans ; or, whether it may have a view to all these *three* great desolations of the country. At the 22d verse God promises to visit his people ; and the glance at their future restoration, in the close of the chapter, leads the prophet to break out, in the XXVth chapter, into a sublime and beautiful Song of Praise, arising more from the prospect of future mercies, than from the recollection of what is past.

The first lessons for this day are the XXVth and the XXVIth chapters ; and those for next Sunday are the XXXth and the XXXIId ; and, as the XXVIIth and the XXVIIIth are, each of them, separate discourses, I shall *now* treat of these *four* chapters, the XXVth to the end of the XXVIIIth.

In the XXVth chapter the prophet breaks out in a Song of Praise to God for his judgments, for his saving benefits, and for his victorious salvation.

“ O Lord, thou art my God ; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name ; for thou hast done wonderful things ; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth ;” thou hast, punctually, and to the very letter, fulfilled what thou didst declare of old. “ For thou hast made, of a city, a heap ; of a defenced city, a ruin : a palace of strangers to be no city ; it shall never be built.” That is, cities, which were so splendid throughout, they were like palaces, to which strangers resorted out of curiosity, shall be utterly ruined. “ Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee ;” those that have been enemies to thee and thy cause, shall bring glory to thee : “ the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee ;” being humbled by these judgments, they shall be converted, or, at least, forced to acknowledge thy power. “ For thou hast



been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in their distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place, even the heat with the shadow of a cloud ;” that is, thou wilt destroy thy enemies, and protect thy Church and Gospel, as easily as thou canst make a cloud to shelter men in the heat of the day : “ the branch,” or, rather, *the rejoicing*, “ of the terrible ones shall be brought low,” and thy people have quiet and refreshment.

“ And in this mountain,” that is, Zion, or the gospel Church, “ shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people,” to the Gentiles, “ a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees ; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” But *how* are *all nations of the earth* to be feasted *at Jerusalem* ? Why *spiritually*, by the graces of God afforded to mankind in Christ Jesus. As our Lord himself, Matt. xxii., compares “ the kingdom of heaven,” that is, the reign of the Messiah, to “ a feast which a king prepared for the marriage of his son ; to which, when they who were first invited, meaning the Jews, refused to come, he sent forth his servants, his ministers, to bring in all sorts of people, whoever they could find, to partake of this entertainment. There can be no doubt but the meaning of this similitude is the heavenly food of the *soul*, which is dispensed indifferently to all nations, by the preaching of the Gospel, according to the unlimited commission which our Lord gave to his apostles. And, as this work was begun at Zion, and this worship at Jerusalem, therefore “ all nations” are said, by the pro-



phet, to be feasted *there*, because *that* is the place from whence they receive this “bread of life\*.”

The prophet proceeds, “And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.” That is, he will destroy that vail of separation, which was drawn of old between Jew and Gentile by the ceremonial law, and that covering of ignorance, darkness, and prejudice, which was spread over the nations, and kept them from the knowledge of the true God. Both these are taken away by the coming of Christ: with *Him* “no man” is “common, or unclean,” upon the account of his nation, or parentage; but he has enlarged the fold of his Church, so as to comprehend all people, Jews and Gentiles, in one flock; and, having, to a certain degree, filled “the earth” with “the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,” (Isaiah xi. 9.) and which knowledge is now daily extending, by missionary, and other, means, all people are, or may be, delivered from dumb idols, and worship God “in spirit and in truth†.”

The Prophet proceeds, verse 8, to disclose another benefit of this dispensation, “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.” This St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 54, expressly applies to the general resurrection; and Isaiah repeats and confirms it, at the 19th verse, of the next chapter, where he introduces the Messiah addressing his church in these words: “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise: Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the

\* Reading's Sermons, Vol. IV. p. 275.    † Idem. p. 276.



dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead." The Jews themselves apply this to the Messiah and his kingdom; but they deceive themselves in supposing that the accomplishment of it was to be at his *first* coming. It was, indeed, then *begun*, by the raising of his own dead body, and several others, out of the grave; but it will not be consummated till the great harvest of the world, at his second appearing, when "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth," (John v. 28, 29.): then, and not till then, shall the prophecies before us be fulfilled, then shall be the triumph of Christ's faithful servants, who have constantly maintained his honour and worship in this present life, against all the opposition of wicked men and devils; when they shall see him "coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," (Matt. xxiv. 30.) to receive them to himself, it will transport them with an ecstasy of joy and gladness and they shall exclaim before all the gazing spectators, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him and he will save us: this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation \*."

It is said, at the 11th verse, "And he spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim." This is supposed, by some commentators, to be an allusion to *the crucifixion of Christ*, as the spreading wide of the hands upon the cross bears a strong resemblance to the spreading them out in swimming. Other particulars of our Lord's crucifixion are intimated in other places of scripture, as where he himself speaks of

\* See Reading, p. 276.



his being “lifted up” (John iii. 14.); and, likewise, Zechariah xii. 10, and St. John, xix. 37, to the piercing of his hands and side, “they shall look on me whom they have pierced.”

It has been the opinion of some holy men of old, that our Lord will usher in his second appearing with *the sign of the cross*, that this is “the sign of the Son of Man” spoken of (Matt. xxiv. 30.) and that he will do this, both for the confusion of his enemies, whose “pride”—“he shall bring down,”—“lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust;” as the Prophet, here, speaks, and for the consolation of all his servants, who have not been ashamed of *the cross of Christ*. The victory which our Lord obtained over death, and the grave, and all the powers of darkness, was begun upon the cross, and perfected in his resurrection\*.

The XXVIth chapter, the first lesson at this evening service, like the former chapter, is a song of praise, and has, probably, a threefold reference, *first* to the return of the Jews from the land of their captivity, especially that of Babylon, *secondly*, the restoration of the family and kingdom of David in the person of the Messiah. And, *thirdly*, the perfect felicity of that kingdom in a state of future glory. It begins, “In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.” By *Judah*, some expositors would have us to consider, in a spiritual sense, the whole state of Christendom, or Church of Christ, and *Zion* and *Jerusalem* are often so used by the Prophets and Apostles. And this song is very properly taken into the devotions

\* See Reading, p. 277.



of all good Christians, both in our churches and private houses \*.

At the 9th verse, it is said, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me, will I seek thee early: for, when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." This, too, is not applicable to those times only, but to all times, and to all persons. Have *we*, as a nation, learned righteousness from the judgments of God which have been in the earth? Have *we*, as individuals, learned righteousness from the judgments, the afflictions, the trials of various kinds, which God has sent upon us? And can we say, "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea with my spirit within me, I will seek thee early?"

At the 20th verse the Saviour says, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee," that is, fly to God, as thy defence; as men retire to their most secret apartments, to shelter themselves in storms and dangers and troubles, thus do thou when the destroying angel is passing through the land: "hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment," the shortest space of time, "until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth, also, shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain," that is, all the blood which the earth has drank, whether shed in unjustifiable war, all private murders, all deaths effected by open, or by underhand, means, and which those who perpetrated them, thought for

\* See Reading, p. 284, 287.



ever *concealed*, shall be disclosed, and their guilt shall appear.

The XXVIIth chapter, as I have already stated, is a discourse by itself, and treats on the nature, measure, and design of God's dealings with his people. To what particular circumstance of the Jewish church and nation this chapter has an immediate reference, it is hard to say; it is applicable to the church in general when under the oppression of any cruel tyrants: such are often described as serpents and dragons; as, also, the devil, the old serpent and great dragon: thus was Pharaoh described, and thus are the popish powers.

At the 9th verse, as well as in the 9th verse of the former chapter, "We are again," says Orton\*, "taught the nature and design of *affliction*. The end of God, in his corrections, is *to take away sin*, to lead men to put away their iniquities with shame and detestation, and never return to them any more. Then our afflictions do us good when they "purge away our iniquity:" and, therefore, when we are afflicted, we should "search and try our ways," and turn again unto the Lord." To good men God moderates afflictions, prunes them in measure and mercy, and tempers the fury of the storm. Afflictions are quite different in their effects upon good and bad men; they are not smitten alike, though it may seem so to us. God's intentions to his children are friendly; all shall issue well, and "work together for their good."

At the 12th verse, it is said, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off from

\* Vol. V. p. 250.



the channel of the river," that is Euphrates, "unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel." But bishop Lowth translates it, "And it shall come to pass in that day, Jehovah shall make a gathering of the fruit, from the flood of the river, to the stream of Egypt; and ye shall be gleaned up one by one, O ye sons of Israel." That is, the Jews shall be recovered and restored; they shall not be brought again in a body, but one by one, through God's influence on their minds. To whatever *time* and *circumstances* this may allude, it is surely encouraging to those who are *now* occupied in endeavouring to enlighten the minds of the sons of Israel, and bring them in, "one by one," to the church of Christ, by human means, looking for the blessing of God upon them\*.

We come, then, to the XXVIIIth chapter, which contains a prophecy directed both to the Israelites and to the Jews. The destruction of the Israelites by Shalmanezzer is manifestly denounced in the 1st to the end of 4th verse.

I have frequently had occasion, in the course of these sermons on the Bible, to speak against the sin of *drunkenness*, which I conceive to be one of the besetting and crying sins of *this parish*. God's warnings and threatenings are truly awful; and, lately, whenever they have occurred, I have said to myself, "Well, surely this will be sufficient. It must have an effect. My parishioners will take warning, and repent and amend. When the subject occurs again, I will not notice it." But, still, the subject does occur, and I again say to myself, "Why should I pass over what God so often urged for the

\* See an excellent sermon on this subject in Simeon's *Horæ Homileticæ*, Vol. V. p. 284.



good of the people in those days, and had them committed to writing for the good of all people in all ages?" My beloved brethren, receive them, then, at once as the *kind warnings* of a father; and, to those who sin on, as the *awful threatenings* of an *offended God*: "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!" that is, Woe to the proud kingdom of the ten tribes, among whom drunkenness much prevailed; Samaria, so beautifully situated on a hill with a rich vale below it, shall be destroyed by the Assyrians. "Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which, as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand;" as easily as an earthen vessel is dashed to the ground. The prophet, then, repeats his threatening, "The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet: and the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer;" it shall be as easily and quickly destroyed as early fruit; or it may be rendered, "the glorious beauty on their head," that is, the garland, "shall be a fading flower, and the fat valley shall be as hasty fruit, that is soon ripe and soon destroyed;"—"which, when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand, he eateth it up."

The prophecy, then, turns to the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, the remnant of God's people, who were to continue a kingdom after the final captivity of the Israelites. It begins, verses 5 and 6, with a favourable account of their affairs under Hezekiah;



“ In that day shall the Lord of Hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of thy people. And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate ;” that is, Hezekiah and his counsellors shall be wise, shall repel the invaders, and carry the war into the country of their enemies.

But it soon changes to reproofs and threatenings for their disobedience and profaneness ; and Judah is reprovèd for the same sin as Israel, “ they, also, have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way.”

What is said, at verses 9 and 10, must plead the excuse of a minister, if he should, frequently and particularly, repeat and dwell upon the same subject : “ Whom shall he,” that is, any man, “ teach knowledge ? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine ? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breast ;” notwithstanding their advantages, they are but like children learning their first rudiments. “ For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept ; line upon line, line upon line ; here a little, and there a little : for, with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people ;” he will send foreign enemies among them, whose language they shall not understand. The apostle, also, (1 Cor. xiv. 21), applies this to the abuse of the gift of tongues, which made that a curse which was intended as a blessing. The prophet proceeds, “ To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing, yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept ; line upon line, line upon



line ; here a little, and there a little ; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken ; and snared, and taken. Wherefore, hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem, Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement ; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us : for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves."

At the 16th verse, the prophet proceeds, " Therefore," that is, in consequence of your refuge of lies and falsehood, that is of idols and foreign alliances, " thus saith the Lord God," I will direct you to a surer refuge, " Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation : he that believeth shall not make haste ;" that is, shall not hurry to and fro, shall not be confounded, like those who are suffering in a besieged city.

*What, and who, this tried, precious, and sure foundation-stone* is, we are told by St. Peter, in his 1st Epistle, chapter ii., verses 4—8., where, speaking of THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, he says, " To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye, also, as lively stones, are built up, a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore, also, it is contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Zion, a chief corner stone, elect, precious : and he that believeth on Him, shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious : but, unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,



and a stone of stumbling and rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto, also, they were appointed.

St. Peter, in this passage, alludes, also, to the cxviii<sup>th</sup> Psalm, the 22<sup>d</sup> verse, “The same stone, which the builders refused, is become the head stone in the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; and it is marvellous in our eyes.” And to this our Lord alludes, in his conversation with the chief priests and elders, Matt. xxi. 42.: and St. Peter, again, Acts iv. 11., in his conversation, with the high priest and elders and scribes, when they questioned him, “by what power, or by what name,” he had restored the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple.

This, also, is that *stone* spoken of by Isaiah, in the viii<sup>th</sup> chapter, 13—15, “Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared and be taken.” And *this* is, again, the *rock of offence*, spoken of by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, ix. where, speaking of the Gentiles and of Israel, and that the Gentiles had attained to righteousness, and that Israel had not, he asks them, verse 32, “Wherefore?” and answers, “Because they sought it not by *faith*, but, as it were, by the works of *the law*: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

The same is spoken of by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, ii. 19—22., with more particulars,



and those of high concern and consolation to Christ's true disciples: "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye, also, are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

At the 22d verse (of this xxviii<sup>th</sup> chapter of Isaiah) he gives the people this important piece of advice, "Now, therefore, be ye not *mockers*, lest your bands," your yokes, your troubles, "be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord God of Hosts a consumption," a consuming away, a destruction, "even determined upon the whole earth," or the whole land.

"We see," here, "the danger of making *a jest* of the word of God. There were scornful men in Jerusalem, who ridiculed the prophet's reproofs and admonitions, therefore 'God made their bands strong;' and gave them up to their own hearts' lusts. They were held in fetters of iniquity, as well as made captives by the Assyrians. We should be particularly cautious against this sin. If what ministers say should not be quite agreeable to our inclinations, or their manner to our taste, we should not be *mockers*. Serious things must not be turned into a jest; for God and his Word jest with no man. What is honestly intended ought to be well taken, and what is seriously spoken ought to be seriously regarded. When men despise the word, and become *sermon-proof*, sin gains dominion over them; and, whether they heed and believe them, or not, the



threatenings of God shall be executed, and the 'consumption' determined shall destroy them\*."

The prophet concludes with a beautiful parable ; which is designed to shew, that, as the husbandman has times and methods for ploughing and manuring the ground, sowing and threshing the grain, and the like, so God has seasons of mercy and judgment, and takes different measures for amendment, or destruction.

"Give ye ear, and hear my voice ; hearken and hear my speech. Doth the ploughman plough all day," or rather *every day*, "to sow? doth he" every day "open and break the clods of the ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley,"—or "the wheat in the principal place, and the barley in the appointed place,"—"and the rye in their place? For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin ; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod ;" different kinds of threshing instruments are used, according to the kind and strength of the grain. "Bread corn is bruised, because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen." This is an allusion to the different ways of threshing practised in that country. "This," that is, skill in husbandry, or, rather, this judgment and consumption, "also, cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in work-

\* Orton, Vol. V. p. 256.



ing;" who afflicts his people more or less, as their characters and cases require.

On this passage, Orton remarks, that "God is to be acknowledged in all the skill and sagacity of mankind; and in the different circumstances and conditions of human life. The business of the husbandman seems to require no great instruction, or discretion, but, in reality, it does; and it is to be wished, that farmers would not plod on in the way of their fathers, without considering how far it is right; but endeavour, by reading, experience, and observation, to improve upon it. Especially should they ask instruction and discretion from God in their business, and give Him praise for their success. Let the different dispensations of Providence to us, to our friends, and to the world, be considered as the appointments of Him who is 'wonderful in counsel;' that we may not mourn and complain, but 'in patience possess our souls,' and cheerfully commit all events to God, who gives men all their wisdom and understanding, and must himself be infinitely wise\*."

\* Vol. V. p. 256.



## SERMON LIII.

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FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.—ISAIAH XXIX—XXXIII.

SENNACHERIB—DISTRESS OF THE JEWS—DESTRUCTION OF THE ASSYRIANS—THE JEWS THREATENED—PROSPERITY PROMISED—SMOOTH PROPHESYINGS—THE WORD BEHIND—THE KING REIGNING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS—THE LIBERAL—DESTRUCTION OF THE ASSYRIANS—JERUSALEM A QUIET HABITATION.

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ISAIAH XXX. 21.

*And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.*

WE have already considered the prophecies of Isaiah to the end of XXVIIIth chapter: the first lessons for this day are the XXXth, and the XXXIId; and the chapters beginning with the XXIXth, to the end of the XXXIId, form one prophecy, or discourse, the 4th of what I have called the fourth part: it is a prophecy of the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib. I purpose, now, therefore, to consider these, which may be more fitly divided into these *five* portions. The *first*, the XXIXth chapter, 1—4., sets forth the great distress of the Jews while the invasion continued. The *second*, 5—8., the sudden destruction of the Assyrian army. The *third*, 9—17., the Jews



are threatened for placing the chief of their religion in outward rites, and not in inward and true piety. The *fourth*, the 18th verse of the XXIXth chapter, to the end of the 17th verse of the XXXIIIrd chapter, prosperity is promised during the latter part of Hezekiah's reign; while reproofs and threatenings, and promises of better times, are interspersed. The *fifth*, XXXIII. 18—24., the whole concludes, in the person of the prophet, with a description of the security of the Jews under the divine protection, and of the miserable state of Sennacherib and his army, blasted and almost destroyed, and exposed to be plundered even by the weakest of the enemy.

We will, then, consider each of these portions in their turn.

I. And, first, the great distress of the Jews while the invasion continued, verse 1—4. The prophet begins, “Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt.” *Ariel* signifies *the lion of God*, and means *Jerusalem*. The *lion* was the emblem, or ensign, of the tribe of *Judah*. Jacob calls his son Judah by this name, in his blessing, (Gen. xlix. 9.) and Christ is called, (Rev. v. 5.,) “the lion of the tribe of Judah.” But, in this place it has a particular reference to the altar of burnt offerings at Jerusalem, which consumed the sacrifices. The prophet goes on, “Add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices:” that is, Go up, or rather, *though* you go up regularly to your solemn feasts, and kill sacrifices as usual, yet all will be in vain, while you continue hypocritical; for “Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow;” notwithstanding this your formal worship, wherein you so much confide, both city and temple shall be brought into great straits: “and it shall be unto me as Ariel;” both Jerusalem,



and the neighbourhood about it, shall be, like the altar, filled with the bodies of dead men ; many shall be killed in sallying out, and many die within the city. “ And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount,” that is, the soldiers of the besieging army shall throw up a high mount that shall command the city, “ and I will raise forts against thee. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as one that hath,” or pretends to have, “ a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust ;” thou shalt be very humble, and speak low, through faintness, or fear of the enemy.

II. He proceeds, then, secondly, 5—8., to set forth the sudden destruction of the Assyrian army : “ Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away : yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of Hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition,” her fortifications, “ and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be, as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth ; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty : or, as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh ; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite : so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion ;” their hope shall be disappointed ; they think to enrich themselves with its



spoil, and swallow it up in their imagination; but they shall be deceived, and their disappointment be the more grievous.

III. The Jews are, then, in the *third* place, 9—17, threatened for placing the chief of their religion in outward rites, and not in inward and true piety: “Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink;” referring to the stupidity of the people in the midst of these alarming displays of Providence. “For the Lord hath poured upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers, hath he covered;” that is, God hath given them up to a stupid, heavy, senseless temper, and permitted the eyes of their understanding to be covered, because they would not consider. “And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: and the book is delivered to him that is *not* learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned;” that is, though the learned know it to be a book that is a prophecy, and an important one, too, yet they are not desirous, nor willing to read it; and the unlearned complain, that it is dark and obscure, above their capacities, and, therefore, they give themselves no concern about it; thus the prejudices of the learned, and the ignorance of the unlearned will defeat the end of the prophet’s instructions. And it is so *at this day*; when we urge the Scriptures to those who *can* read and understand them well, if they will give their minds to it, they say “I do not understand it *so*,” or “I cannot under-



stand it," or they, altogether, as it is called, *turn a deaf ear to it*. And, when we urge the Scriptures to those who *cannot* read, they say, "I am no scholar, I do not understand it;" it is that they *will not* understand, and are conscious that the word of God, more strongly than their own consciences, must condemn them. The Prophet proceeds, "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precept of men," by false prophets, or traditions of their teachers, as our Lord explains it, Matt. xv. 8. and Mark vii. 6. "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid;" because they *will not* understand, they *shall not*; their sins shall be their punishment: and this shall be a marvellous thing, the people shall lose their understanding in a wonderful degree, especially those who are now famous for it. "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?" that is, Woe to the politicians who think God does not know their schemes, and who have formed them without any regard to his word, his prophets, or his providence: who know that their counsels are not agreeable to his will, and, therefore, wish to conceal them. "Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for, shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?"



that is, their inverting the order of things, and leaving God out of their politics, without whom they have no more power to do any thing than clay has without the potter, is, in effect, denying him to be their creator, or denying his wisdom. “Is it not yet,” says the prophet, “a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest.” This is a proverbial expression of a great and surprising alteration, and is applicable, both to the happy consequences of Sennacherib’s defeat, and to Hezekiah’s forwarding a reformation among them.

IV. In the *fourth* portion, beginning at the 18th verse of this XXIXth chapter, and going on to the 17th verse of the XXXIIIrd chapter, prosperity is promised during the latter part of Hezekiah’s reign; while reproofs, and threatenings, and promises of better times are interspersed. “And, in that day,” says the prophet, “shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. The meek, also, shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel;” they shall no longer say that the book is sealed: but humble souls shall learn God’s will, shall do it, and rejoice in it. “For the terrible one,” the Assyrian enemy, without, “is brought to nought, and the scorner,” at home, “is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity,” for opportunities of sin and mischief, “are cut off: That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.” Those who opposed Hezekiah’s reformation, and mocked the prophets, were glad to find any defects and imprudences in good men, that they might



wound *religion* thereby : for this purpose, they strained every word, and were especially glad to find any thing amiss in magistrates, or ministers. Many of these were, perhaps, slain by the Assyrians. “ Therefore,” continues the prophet, “ thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But, when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Israel ;” that is, a new generation of the faithful shall spring up, who shall be in covenant with God, and shall sanctify him, and all good men shall rejoice in the progress of the reformation. “ They, also, that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine ;” that is, those who were, formerly, prejudiced shall become humble ; those who said, The word is hard, or The law is unreasonable, shall find it otherwise, and be made wise and good by it.

The XXXth chapter, the first lesson at this morning service, contains reproofs to the Israelites for their confidence in the assistance of Egypt when the Assyrians came against them. The Prophet, after denouncing “ Woe to the rebellious children,” says, at the 3d verse, “ Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion : For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes,” called also Tahpanhes ; the ambassadors of Israel met those of Egypt there, they had what is called *a congress* to settle the terms of the alliance.

At the 8th verse, the prophet represents God as saying to him, “ Now, go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the



time to come, for ever and ever ;” that is, publish it, and let it be recorded, as a warning to future ages : “ That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord : which say to the seers, See not ; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things ; speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits ;” though they did not, perhaps, make use of these very words, yet this was the true *meaning* and *intent* of what they said, while persecuting and mocking the true prophets, and encouraging the false ones, Preach only that which may gratify our humours and our lusts.

“ God’s holiness is the great terror of sinners. The thought is too weighty, and the expression too serious for men that choose to go on in their sin ; for, if he be a Holy Being, he must hate and punish those that are unholy. Hence they love those ministers that “prophecy smooth things,” that deal in generals, and give their consciences no alarm. But, those who shew them the evil of sin, preach searching sermons, and reprove their vices, they dislike. Yet faithful ministers *must*, and *will*, tell sinners, whether they like it, or not, that God is a Holy Being, “ of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ;” and that “ without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” It is better that they should be roused and displeased, than that they should be condemned for impenitence, and their ministers for unfaithfulness \*.”

At the 18th verse, he says, “ And, therefore,” or rather, *nevertheless*, “ will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you ;” and sets forth the blessings which he will confer upon them. At the 21st verse, he says, in the words which I have chosen for

\* Orton, Vol. V. p. 267.



my text, "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee," the admonitions of some faithful minister, or friend, the dictates of conscience, or the influences of the Spirit, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Or, it would have been more intelligible had the parts of the sentence been differently placed, "And when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left, thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, *This* is the way, walk ye in it."

"See what a blessing *the means of grace* are, and how highly they should be valued. God promises his people, that, though they should be afflicted, reduced to famine and straits, yet *they should have their teachers continued*, and those who know the value of *the word*, its instructions, warnings, and counsels, will look upon this as a great favour, sufficient to sweeten the bread of adversity, though it is to be feared that many had rather be without teachers and means of grace, than lose their substance, or be in straits. It is a blessing to have faithful friends, to admonish us, a tender conscience, that will check us when doing evil, and the Spirit of God, to impress the warnings of the word and the convictions of conscience. We are all in danger of mistaking our way; of turning to the right hand or to the left; of going into one error, or another; let us, therefore, reverence the word of God, esteem his faithful ministers in love, and attend to that friendly admonition, from whomsoever it comes, 'This is the way, walk ye in it \*.'"

The XXXIst chapter is a renewing of the denouncing of woes against the Israelites, with promises of deliverance, at length, from their oppressor.

\* Orton, Vol. V. p. 267.



The XXXIId chapter, the first lesson at this evening service, opens with the cheering prospect and promise, “Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” This has a reference, in the first place, to Hezekiah; but it has a farther and stronger reference to Christ, and the blessings of his Gospel, as is common in the prophets. He, indeed, reigns “in righteousness,” being himself perfectly holy, and his administration inflexibly just. He is a shelter and refreshment to his people in every storm. As is a shelter to a traveller, after contending for hours with a beating wind, or driving storms of rain and hail,—as is a stream of pure water to one who has been travelling a length of time over a barren sandy desert,—and as is the cool shelter of a shadowing rock, to one, who has been travelling for hours, heavily laden, under a noon-tide sun, without a breath of air, save that which blows upon him with a burning heat—*such*, and *more* is CHRIST to the repenting sinner, weary of his load of guilt, parched by a sense of the fierceness of God’s wrath, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Come, “Come unto Him, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and He will” indeed “refresh you!”

At the 5th verse, he says, “The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful,” or honourable; a good judgment shall be formed of men; worthy, valuable persons shall be promoted, and others discountenanced; the reason of this is given, “For the vile person will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise



hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail ;” that is, a vile person will shew his iniquity by his practice, his profaneness against God, and his cruelty to man. “ The instruments, also, of the churl are evil : he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right ;” that is, he will find some wicked men to be active in his evil designs, and, by specious pretences, destroy the needy when he has a good cause. “ But the liberal deviseth liberal things ; and by liberal things shall he stand ;” he will aim to do all the good he can, and shall be established in prosperity and reputation.

“ It is a good sign,” says Orton, on this passage, when men and things are called by their proper names ; when ‘ vile persons are not called liberal,’ or gentlemen ; and ‘ churls,’ men of a selfish, surly disposition, styled ‘ honourable.’ It is happy for a nation, when only good things are called by good names ; when virtue and virtuous men are esteemed, and held in reputation ; when men are valued, not by their rank and titles, but by their beneficence and usefulness. If difference of character was not so wretchedly confounded as it is in our common language, and there was greater openness and plainness of discourse, it would tend greatly to the support of righteousness. Let *us*, then, emulate the character of a ‘ citizen of Sion, in whose eyes a vile person is contemned, and who honoureth them that fear the Lord.’ ”

He continues, “ Liberality is not the way to contempt and ruin, for ‘ the liberal’ man ‘ deviseth liberal things, and by them shall he stand.’ He contrives how he may be able to do good ; he retrenches



superfluities, and saves needless expences, not that he may hoard up wealth, but that he may do the more good. He endeavours to be as extensively beneficent as possible, and by his charity he shall stand ; his prosperity shall be increased by the blessing of heaven ; he shall be esteemed by men, have peace in his own mind, and obtain favour of the Lord ; and he that does not think this an abundant equivalent for parting with his money, is a *vile* and *churlish* person\*.”

The XXXIII<sup>d</sup> chapter refers to the invasion and destruction of the Assyrians, and the happy effects of it to Israel. At the 13<sup>th</sup> verse it is said, “Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done ; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid ; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire ? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings ?” When they expected the city to be taken, plundered, and burned ; though they made a jest of the threatening before, and were secure and careless, yet, now, they were struck with fear, and sunk into despair. Thus cowardly and uneasy does guilt make men. And no wonder if it affects sinners under the Gospel in the same manner, when they think of those devouring flames, and “everlasting burnings” which are threatened against all the workers of iniquity †.

But, on the other hand, it is said, at the 15<sup>th</sup> verse, “He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly ; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hand from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood,” will not

\* Vol. V. p. 272.

† See Orton, Vol. V. p. 277.



hear any scheme tending to shed blood, or to gratify revenge, “and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;” will not willingly see evil committed, but has a great aversion to it, and will punish it, and prevent it, if he can; “He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure;” he shall be defended and supplied with provisions during the extremity of the siege. “Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off;” that is, they shall, in the first place, see Hezekiah, having put off his sackcloth, and appearing in his royal robes with a pleasant countenance, and the people who had been shut up during the siege, shall travel abroad, which, after their confinement, would be particularly pleasant. And, in the second place, the righteous,—they who have put on the righteousness of Christ,—shall see King Messiah, who “ruleth in righteousness,” in his beauty, in the glory of his Father with his holy angels, and “they shall behold the land,” the heavenly Canaan, in a beauty superior to that in which the earthly Canaan appeared, ere sin and misery had impaired its beauty and its joy.

V. At the 18th verse begins what I have called the *fifth* portion of this discourse, or prophecy, in which the prophet concludes with a description of the security of the Jews under the divine protection, and of the miserable state of Sennacherib and his army, blasted and almost destroyed, and exposed to be plundered even by the weakest of their enemies. “Thine heart shall meditate terror;” that is, it shall review its former fears, and its triumph over the Assyrians. Where is *the scribe*? where is *the receiver*? where is *he that counted the towers*? In the



language of these days, Where is *the secretary of war*? where is *the paymaster*? where is *the chief engineer*? All these great persons in the army are vanished away. The Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. i. 20., in the way of allusion, applies this to the success of the Gospel over heathen powers and philosophy. The prophet continues, “Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand:” that is, the Assyrians, who had a deep harsh language, carrying terror with it. “Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle,” or tent, “that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken;” alluding to the manner in which a tent is set up by means of stakes and cords, nothing of which, it is here promised, should be damaged by the enemy. “But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby;” though there is no river about Jerusalem, as a defence to it, only a little brook, *God* will be as “a broad river” to it, over which no ship shall pass to hurt or destroy it. “For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us. Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail;” that is, the Assyrian force, when attempting to pass the “broad river” mentioned before, (verse 21.,) that is attempting to oppose THE LORD, shall be shipwrecked: “then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey;” it shall be so abundant, that those who can neither fight, nor



pursue, shall have a part. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity;" they shall forget their sickness, for joy of their great deliverance, which shall be a comfortable token that their sins are forgiven them.

How ought we to rejoice in God's care of *the Church* amidst all its dangers and alarms! It is, indeed, desirable to have "the city of our solemnities a quiet habitation," and God can make it so. It needs no river to keep off invading foes, no force to repel them; his Almighty Power is sufficient. Let us think what he did for Israel, what he has done for his Church, yea, for *our own land*. Let us "meditate terror," review our fears, when a wrathful enemy threatened to swallow us up; and give glory to God for our national prosperity, success and peace; and be careful to behave towards him, as those who know, that "the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us." Let us commit our cause to him, and observe his law; then we may cheerfully trust in his protection, and be assured that he will bless us\*.

But, oh! how infinitely more blessed will be that day, when "the inhabitant" of the new Jerusalem shall no longer say, "I am sick" with *sin*; "the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" for the sake of THE CRUCIFIED JESUS.

\* See Orton, Vol. V. p. 278.



## SERMON LIV.

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CHRISTMAS DAY.—ISAIAH VII—IX.

THE SIGN OFFERED TO AHAZ—IMMANUEL—REFUSING GOD'S  
SIGNS—THE MESSIAH—THE CHILD BORN—CALLED WONDERFUL  
—COUNSELLOR—THE MIGHTY GOD—THE EVERLASTING FATHER  
—THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

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### ISAIAH ix. 6.

*For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

I HAVE before stated, that Isaiah is called by commentators *The Evangelical Prophet*, and *The Evangelist*, because he is the *messenger* and recorder of *good news*, the glad tidings of salvation, by the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. The passages in which he does this are many and dispersed throughout his book; but none are more remarkable than those selected by the church for the first lessons at morning and evening service on this day, when we commemorate the birth of Him to whom we owe every blessing in this life, and every hope in the life to come, and which he will most assuredly fulfil, if we believe, and trust, and live in him. These passages are, for the first lesson at morning service, the IXth chapter, the 1st, to the end of the 7th verse; and,



for the first lesson at this evening's service, the VIIth chapter, the 10th, to the end of the 16th verse. We will consider them in the order in which they stand in the Bible, the VIIth chapter, as speaking of the prophecy, or promise, of this miraculously-produced *Son*; and, then, the IXth, in which the *Prophet*, as an *Evangelist*, passing over some hundreds of years \*, “wrapt into future times,” speaks of the wonderful child as actually *born*; his birth being as certain, from God's promise, as if he were then actually in the world.

In my sermon on the second Sunday in advent, when considering the chapters, beginning with the IIIrd, and ending with the XXIVth, I stated that, from the 1st verse of the VIIth chapter, to the end of the 7th verse of the IXth chapter, was one prophecy, or discourse, and *in this* the two small portions for the first lessons of this day are comprised.

The occasion of it was this: Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, went up towards Jerusalem, when Ahaz was king, to war against it, and to dethrone, if not to extirpate, the royal family of David, and to set the son of Tabeal upon the throne. “And it was told the house of David,” that is, Ahaz and the royal family, “saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim.” And they were “moved,” —“as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind;” they were in the utmost consternation. “Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, Go forth, now, to meet Ahaz, thou and *Shear-jashub* thy son.” This name, as I stated in a former discourse †, signified “*a remnant shall return*,” and was given him as a token, or prophetic promise, that the captives, who

\* 742 years.

† Sermon L. p. 261.



should be carried to Babylon, should *return* thence, after a certain time. Isaiah was ordered to take him, and to meet Ahaz, and to charge him not to be afraid of these confederate kings and their armies, however powerful. And, to confirm his assurance that no power should finally prevail against the house of David till the Messiah was born, he desires him to ask *a sign* of God, some *miracle*, “either in the depth, or in the height above,” some such as was granted, afterwards, to Hezekiah, when the sun, or shadow, went backwards on the sun dial of Ahaz. (2 Kings xx. 11. Isaiah xxxviii. 8.) “But Ahaz,” being secretly determined not to trust the God of his forefather David, whose ways he had forsaken, but to seek help from the king of Assyria, “said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord;” he pretended religion, and a regard to God, as the reason, while his motives were solely political and profane. And Isaiah said, “Hear ye, now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God, also?” This is, not only a slight to me, but to the patience and kindness of God. “Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign,” he will give one in his own wisdom, mercy and majesty, and that a *double sign*, first, that the house of David should not be destroyed, and, secondly, that they should speedily be delivered;—“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel;” that is, as we are told by St. Matthew, (i. 23.,) “God with us,” or God dwelling with man in a human body. The prophet proceeds, *Nevertheless* “Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know,” or till he knows how, “to refuse the evil, and choose the good,” that is, he shall be bred up as other children are; and the land shall continue



its fruitfulness, and be capable of nourishing its inhabitants till he is born; and, as he is to be born of the house of David, this is a sign that *that* house shall not fail. “For, before the child,” that is *this child* that is now in my hand, my infant son, *Shear-jashub*, (verse 3.) “shall know to refuse the evil, and chuse the good, the land that thou abhorrest” or, rather, the land that thou *carest for with great concern*, the land of Judah, of which they have now got possession, “shall be forsaken of both her kings,” shall be left clear, or free, by both the kings; the king of Syria and the king of Israel, shall both be destroyed by the king of Assyria, and the two hundred thousand captives they have taken shall be restored by the influence of God upon their minds; according to the meaning of the name of the prophet’s son \*. (see 2 Kings xv. 29, 30. xvi. 9. 2 Chron. xxviii. 8—15.)

It were unprofitable, would our time allow it, to enter into the objections which have been made by the Jews to this interpretation and application of this prophecy, and into the difficulties which have been suggested by various commentators. For *our* purpose, it seems necessary to observe merely *this*, that, whatever difficulties and objections there may be, yet, still, it is *certain*, upon as plain an evidence as can be wished, on such a subject, that this prophecy was delivered by Isaiah several hundred years before the birth of Christ, that it was in the keeping of the Jews, and acknowledged by them: that his prophecies, *in general*, were acknowledged by Christ

\* The reader who may wish for further satisfaction as to the transition from one child to the other, and on the connection between the two, will find them ably and elegantly set forth in the III<sup>d</sup> of Dr. Apthorpe’s able Discourses on Prophecy, Vol. I. p. 112—119.



himself, and that *this particular prophecy* is applied by St. Matthew, I. 22, 23, to the miraculous birth of Christ of the Virgin Mary, “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of *the Lord*, by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is GOD WITH US.”

On this history and prophecy I will make but a few observations further. The first is, that it was a proverb among the heathen, and, probably, also, among the Jews, when they wished to express any thing that was *to last for ever*, they said *until a virgin shall bring forth*, as the temple of peace, with the Romans, should stand *until a virgin should bring forth* \*. So, the *sign* which God grants to Ahaz and the whole Jewish nation is what was held to be one of the greatest miracles that could take place : but “with God all things are possible.”

I would, next, suggest, that, if the name *Emmanuel* signifies *God with us*, how far is it right to give it to a human being ? We should think it profane to give the name of *Jesus*, or *Christ*, to one of our children, and is it not equally so to give that of *Emmanuel* ? It is true, that the name is given to a *college* in our neighbouring University, and so is *Jesus* and *Christ* ; but the meaning of that is, that those colleges were built and dedicated to the name of Jesus Christ, our Emmanuel, to educate young men in the Christian faith, to his honour and glory. And, besides, when a name of great meaning and pretension is given to a child, we expect, when he is

\* *Quoad virgo peperit.* See Bishop Andrews on the Commandments, p. 60., quoted by Wogan, Vol. i. p. 153.



grown up, to see his *life* answering to this *pretension*, and, if it falls short, instead of honour, the name brings shame and contempt.

I will, next, make a short application of the reply of Ahab to Isaiah, verse 12., “I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.” To *tempt* the Lord, is, either to mistrust his providence, or to expect some extraordinary instance of it, for confirming our belief, where the ordinary means of faith are sufficient, (see Deut. vi. 16. Matt. iv. 7.) But this refusal of *Ahab* to *ask* a sign, did not proceed from his having already a sufficient persuasion of God’s power, or veracity; but, rather, from a secret contempt and distrust of his word, under a pretence of modesty, and a shew of piety; and, very probably, because he had purposed in his heart to send to the Assyrians for assistance.—This seems to be the reason why the prophet, in the next verse, breaks out into that warm exhortation, “Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God, also?” And it may justly be observed, that, as this was feigned piety, and a real disobedience, in *Ahab* to *refuse* a *sign*, when he was commanded to *ask* one; so it is, in a Christian, now, to neglect the *Holy Communion*, (that sacred *sign* of our Lord’s passion) under pretence of unworthiness, while the heart secretly fosters sin, and resists the Divine Grace. This is a false modesty, a voluntary counterfeit humility, and downright hypocrisy.—They, also, may expect to hear the like reproof from God, who reject *both* the Sacraments of *Baptism* and *the Lord’s Supper*, on a vain presumption that they believe without these *signs*, and that their faith stands in no need of such helps; as if such means, though positively appointed by God, were wholly indifferent, if not superfluous,



and unnecessary to salvation. But this is, in effect, to reject the whole Gospel of Christ, who instituted them, and who knows, better than we do, what we stand in need of. Therefore, as it is a point of impiety not to believe without signs, when God will give none; or to require new signs, when there be already signs and proofs sufficient; so it is a profane neglect to *refuse signs* when *offered*, as, here, Ahaz did, and as is the case of all those who reject the *Holy Sacraments*, which “Christ hath ordained in his Church,” as “outward and visible *signs* of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us,” and as “means whereby we receive the same,” and “as pledges to assure us thereof\*.”

But we must return to the prophecy of Isaiah, the VIIth chapter. At the 17th verse begins a denunciation of the calamities that were to be brought upon the king and people of Judah, by the Assyrians, whom they had hired to assist them. These predictions and denunciations are repeated and confirmed in the VIIIth chapter, the 9th and 10th verses of which contain a general assurance, that all the designs of the enemies of God's people shall, in the end, be rendered of no effect; and the discourse concludes,—after various admonitions and threatenings, from the 11th verse of the VIIIth chapter, to the end of the 1st verse of the IXth chapter,—with an illustrious prophecy, 2—7, in the first instance, perhaps, of the restoration of prosperity under Hezekiah; but, principally, of the manifestation of the Messiah, the transcendent dignity of his character, and the universality and eternal duration of his kingdom. This is the *general outline* of it, we will, now, proceed to the particulars.

\* See Wogan, Vol. I. p. 155.



In the VIIIth chapter, the 18th verse, the prophet says, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts which dwelleth in Zion;" which may mean, not only that the children of the prophet were types and figures of great things; but, also, that the Gentiles, Christ's spiritual seed, the children of Abraham by faith, should be wondered at for believing these promises, and trusting in the Messiah. The prophet proceeds, "And, when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter:" then, he says, the pious Israelites shall answer, "Should not a people seek unto their God? for" or should "the *living* to the *dead*?" that is, Should the living seek to dead idols? how absurd and stupid were this! "To the law and to the testimony," to *the word of God*, keep close to *that*: "if they speak not according to his word, it is because there is no light," no understanding, no piety, "in them. And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry. And it shall come to pass, that, when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their god, and look upward;" that is, when unbelievers pass through the land, they shall curse their king or rulers for hiring the Assyrians, and giving them up to them. "And they shall look on the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness;" they shall be driven into perplexity and sorrow, both of mind and body. Then begins the IXth chapter, the first lesson, at morning service, of this day, "Nevertheless the dimness," or this darkness, "shall not be such as was in her vexation, when, at the first, he lightly



afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naph-tali, and, afterwards, did more grievously afflict her;" or, we are told it may be better translated, "as the first time made vile the land of Zebulun," that is, by the Assyrians, "so the latter time shall make them glorious,"—"by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations." It is called Galilee of the nations, or of the Gentiles, because it was peopled by many of the heathen, by reason of its nearness to Tyre and Sidon, and to distinguish it from the other Galilee. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death," that is, the thickest and most perplexing darkness, "upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and" it is here said "*not* increased the joy;" but, it should, rather, have been translated, "and hast *increased* the joy to him," or "to it," that is, to the Jewish nation. "They joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian;" as when Gideon overthrew the Midianites, (Judges vii. 22), by such unlikely and seemingly-contemptible means. "For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise," with shouts and groans, the sound of trumpets and the clash of arms, "and garments rolled in blood; but this," referring to the deliverance of God's people by Christ, from the yoke of sin and Satan, "shall be with burning and fuel of fire." The preaching of the Gospel might seem an unlikely means, but it should be successful, owing to the influences of the Spirit, which appeared in the likeness of *fiery tongues* on the day of Pentecost, and which should be like *fire*, and spread like *flame*.



This deliverance, the prophet assures them shall certainly be accomplished, “For,” says he, “unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder,” Christ, the king of Israel, shall be born for our redemption, “and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, and forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.”

On each of these *names*, or *characters*, of Christ we will say a few words.

1. Some commentators suppose the words WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR to form but one name, or title, while others consider them as two, and to be taken separate. The character of Christ answers to the name, in whichever light they may be taken.

If separate, “who so WONDERFUL as our Lord and Saviour, in his birth, which was foretold by an angel, accomplished by a poor virgin, and proclaimed by the heavenly powers to the shepherds and wise men of the *East*? Who so *wonderful* in his preservation from the fate of the children massacred by Herod, and from divers attempts made, afterwards, upon his life by the envious Jews? Who so *wonderful* in the favour of God, who owned him for his Son by audible voices from heaven; and in mighty works which he daily wrought, healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, casting out of devils? Who so *wonderful* as he, who raised his own body from the grave, and ascended with it into heaven in the presence of many spectators, and sent down his pro-



mised Spirit upon the apostles, and endued them with power to work the same miracles as he had done \* ?” Who so *wonderful* as he, who is to come again in the clouds of heaven and judge the living and the dead, small and great, to send the wicked into everlasting fire, and to receive the righteous—those made righteous by his righteousness—into everlasting blessedness ?

“ These things do not seem so strange to many of us, because we are brought up from our infancy in reading and hearing of them : which familiarity takes off from their surprise. But, if we would seriously consider them, and lay them together, and compare our Lord, in these respects, with all the histories that ever came to our knowledge, we shall be fully convinced, that he was the most *wonderful* person that was ever born into the world †.”

If we consider him as a COUNSELLOR, he is, indeed, a WONDERFUL Counsellor. He, in concert with the Father, formed the stupendous plan of man’s redemption, a plan in which are contained all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Moreover, in executing this plan, he has, not only defeated all the plots and devices of Satan, but has invariably over-ruled them for the accomplishment of his own designs. His people, too, he endues with “ wisdom from above,” enabling them to discern things hidden from the carnal eye, and guiding them in the way to heaven, so that “ a wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.” (Isaiah xxxv. 8.) Who that has known ever so small a part of his ways, must not exclaim with amazement, “ How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ?”

\* Reading, Vol. IV. p. 324.

† Ibid. p. 325.



## 2. He is called next THE MIGHTY GOD.

Angels and magistrates are sometimes called *gods* in a lower sense ; but He is *the Mighty God*. “ God with us,” even “ God over all, blessed for ever.” (Rom. ix. 5.) His providence and grace shew him to be a “ God, wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.” (Isaiah xxviii. 29.) Indeed, if he were *not* God, he never could bear upon his shoulder the government of the universe. He must be present every where, he must know all things, he must have “ all power in heaven and in earth,” (Matt. xxviii. 18.) or else he never could hear the supplications, and supply the wants, of all his people at the same instant. St. Paul, accordingly, informs us, Col. ii. 9., that “ in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” And, Heb. i. 3., that he is “ the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power.” However strange, therefore, it may seem, He who was a little child, was, at the same time, the mighty God ; it was “ the Lord of Glory that was crucified,” (1 Cor. ii. 8.) ; it was “ God who purchased the Church with his own blood.”

The words of one of our Christmas Hymns come to my mind, and I will not suppress them :

Where is this stupendous stranger ?

Swains of Solyma, advise,

Lead me to my Master's manger,

Shew me where my Saviour lies.

O Most Mighty ! O Most Holy !

Far beyond the seraph's thought !

Art thou, then, so mean and lowly

As unheeded prophets taught ?



O the magnitude of meekness !  
 Worth from worth-immortal sprung !  
 O the strength of infant weakness,  
 If eternal is so young !

God all-bounteous, all-creative,—  
 Whom no ills from good dissuade,—  
 Is incarnate, and a native  
 Of the very world he made !

SMART.

### 3. Christ is, next, called, THE EVERLASTING FATHER.

This title respects not his relation to the Godhead, (for, with respect to *that*, he is the SON, and not the Father) but, rather, his relation to his spiritual children, whom he has begotten by his Word and Spirit. But we are told, that the words should, rather, have been translated, “The Father of the everlasting age.” The Jewish dispensation was intended to continue but for a limited time ; but the Christian dispensation was never to be succeeded by any other : hence it is called “the last days ;” (Heb. i. 2.) and may be considered as “the everlasting age.” Of this Christ is the author ; it owes its existence to him as its parent ; it is preserved by his guardian care ; and the whole family in heaven and earth who partake its blessings, both bear his image, and inherit his glory.

### 4. He is, lastly, called THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

In all which Christ has done, whether in planning or executing the work of redemption, he has consulted the *peace* and welfare of his people. It was to purchase their peace that he became incarnate and died upon the cross. It was to bestow on them the blessings of *peace* that he took the reigns of government. *Peace* was the legacy which he left to



his Church, when he was just departing from the world ; and, on his ascension, he poured it down on myriads of his blood-thirsty enemies : yea, at this very hour, does he disperse it according to his own sovereign will, and impart it, with royal munificence, to all the subjects of his kingdom ; and, were all the world truly Christian, all would be “ peace upon earth” under “ the Prince of Peace \*.”

And the time will come when it shall be so, for the prophet proceeds, “ Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even forever.” Amen, even so be it.

And, now, to God, &c.

\* See Simeon's Helps to Composition, Vol. I. p. 170.



his Church, when he was just departing from the world; and, on his ascension, he poured it down on myriads of his blood-thirsty enemies: yes, at this very hour, does he impart it with royal munificence, to all the subjects of his kingdom: and, were all the world truly Christian, all would be a peace upon earth, and good will to men.

## SERMON LV.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.—ISAIAH XXXIV—XXXIX.

VENGEANCE AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF GOD—THE MESSIAH  
—HEBREW POETRY—SENNACHERIB—HEZEKIAH'S VAIN-GLORY  
—GEORGE III. AND BONAPARTE—SET THINE HOUSE IN ORDER  
—A DEATH-BED.

ISAIAH XXXviii. 1.

*In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.*

THE first lessons for the first Sunday after Christmas are the XXXVIIth and the XXXVIIIth chapters of the prophet Isaiah, and for the second Sunday the XLIst and the XLIIId. On the fourth Sunday in Advent, we left off at the end of the XXXIIId chapter. I purpose, therefore, now, to begin with the XXXIVth, and consider that part of the book to the end of the XXXIXth.

The XXXIVth and XXXVth chapters contain one distinct prophecy, or discourse, being the fifth of what I have called the *fourth* part. It is an entire, regular, and beautiful poem, consisting of two parts: the first containing a denunciation of divine vengeance against the enemies of the people, or church of God; the second describing the flourishing state



of the church of God, after the execution of those judgments. The event foretold is represented as of the highest importance, and of universal concern: all nations are called upon to attend to the declaration of it; and the wrath of God is denounced against all the nations; that is, all those that had provoked to anger the defender of the cause of Sion. Among those *Edom* is particularly mentioned, who had insulted the Jews in their distress, and had joined against them with their enemies the Chaldeans. (Amos i. 11. Ezek. xxv. 12. xxxv. 15. Psalm cxxxvii. 7.) Accordingly, the Edomites were, together with the rest of the neighbouring nations, ravaged and laid waste by Nebuchadnezzar. (Jerem. xxv. 15—26. Mal. i. 3, 4.) This may be the event which the prophet has principally in view in the XXXIVth chapter: but this event, as far as we have any account of it in history, seems by no means to come up to the terms of the prophecy, or to justify so terrible a description. And it is not easy to discover what connection the very flourishing state of the church, or people of God, described in the next chapter, could have with those events, and how the former could be the consequence of the latter, as it is there represented to be. By a figure of speech very common in the writings of the prophets, any city, or people, remarkably distinguished as enemies of the people and kingdom of God, is put for those enemies in general. This seems, here, to be the case with Edom and Bozrah, the capital city of that country. It seems, therefore, reasonable to suppose, with many learned expositors, that this prophecy has a farther view to events *still to come*; to some great revolutions to be effected in later times, before that more perfect state of the kingdom of God upon



earth, and serving to introduce it, which the holy Scriptures warrant us to expect.

That the XXXVth chapter has a view beyond any thing, that could be the immediate consequence of those events, is plain from every part, especially from the middle of it, verses 5, 6, where the miracles wrought by our blessed Saviour are so clearly specified, that we cannot avoid making the application: and our Lord himself, Matt. xi, 4, 5, has, moreover, plainly referred to this very passage, as speaking of himself and his works: when John sent his disciples to him to know whether he was really THE CHRIST, he bids them to return, and report to their master the things which they heard and saw, “the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, and the deaf hear;” and leaves it to *him* to draw the *conclusion*, in answer to his inquiry, whether *He*, who performed the very *works*, which the prophet foretold should be performed by the *Messiah*, was not indeed THE MESSIAH HIMSELF. And where are these *works* so distinctly marked by any of the prophets, as in *this place*? and how could they be marked more distinctly? To these the strictly-*literal* interpretation of the prophet’s words directs us. According to the *allegorical* interpretation, they may have a *farther* view: this part of the prophecy may run parallel with the second advent of Christ; to the conversion of the Jews, and their restoration to their land; to the extension and purification of the Christian faith; events foretold in the Holy Scriptures, as being a preparation to it\*.

[As Bishop Lowth has selected the prophecy contained in these two chapters as an example of the

\* See Bishop Lowth’s Isaiah, 4to. Notes, p. 170.



*poetic style* in which the prophet delivers his predictions, and has illustrated the various beauties which distinguish this simple, regular and perfect poem, I will give you the substance of his remarks, as briefly and plainly as I am able.

The prophet begins the subject by a lofty introduction, calling upon all nature to observe these events, in which the whole world should seem to be interested :

“ Come near, ye nations, to hear ;

“ And hearken unto me, ye people !

“ Let the earth hear, and all that is therein ;

“ The world, and all things that come forth of it.”

He, then, publishes the decree of Jehovah concerning the destruction of all those nations against whom “ his wrath is kindled :” and he enlarges upon this act of vengeance, by a vast variety of splendid imagery, all of which is of the same kind with that which is made use of by the prophets upon like occasions ; the nature of which is to exaggerate the force, the magnitude, atrocity and importance of the impending visitation ; in which nothing is precisely specified concerning the manner, the time, the place, or other minute circumstances. He, first, exhibits that truly warlike picture of slaughter and destruction after a victory : verse 3.

“ Their slain also shall be cast out,

“ And their stink shall come up out of their carcasses,

“ And the mountains shall be melted with their blood.”

He, then, takes a bolder flight, and illustrates his description by imagery borrowed from the destruction of the heaven and the earth, as if he were dis-



playing the total overthrow of the universe itself :  
verse 4. :

“ And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved,

“ And the heavens shall be rolled together as a  
scroll :

“ And all their host shall fall down,

“ As the leaf falleth off from the vine,

“ And as a falling fig from the fig-tree.”

A different image is immediately introduced, a solemn sacrifice is celebrated, and a vast number of victims are displayed : Jehovah himself takes a part in this magnificent scene, and every circumstance is brought directly before our eyes : verses 5, 6. :

“ For my sword shall be bathed in heaven :

“ Behold it shall come down upon Idumea,

“ And upon the people of my curse to judgment.

“ The sword of the Lord is filled with blood ;

“ It is made fat with fatness,

“ And with the blood of lambs and goats,

“ With the fat of the kidneys of rams :

“ For the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah,

“ And a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.”

Here the goats, the rams, the bulls, the flocks, and other animals, which are mentioned, are commonly used by the prophets to represent the haughty, fierce and insolent tyrants and chiefs of those nations which were opposed to God. On the same principle we may explain the allusion to Bozrah and Idumea, in the highest degree unfriendly to the people of God, as I before observed.

But the same circumstance is again described by a succession of new and splendid images, borrowed from the overthrow of Sodom : verses 8, 9, 10.

“ For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance,



“ And the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion.

“ And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch,

“ And the dust thereof into brimstone,

“ And the land thereof shall become burning pitch.

“ It shall not be quenched night nor day ;

“ The smoke thereof shall go up forever ;

“ From generation to generation it shall lie waste ;

“ None shall pass through it for ever and ever.”

The same event is further displayed under the image of a vast and solitary desert, to become which, according to the divine decree, that country is doomed. This description the prophet, afterwards, improves, varies and enlarges, by the addition of several important circumstances, all which, however, have a certain relation, or connection, with each other : but I must not take up your time with reading it.

The other part of the poem contained in the XXXVth chapter, is formed upon similar principles, and displays a beautiful contrast to the former scene. The imagery, or figures, possess every possible advantage of ornament and variety. Like the former, it is altogether of a general kind, and of extensive application, but the meaning is plain. Many of the *former* images are taken from the *sacred history* ; the *following* are almost entirely from the objects of *nature* : verses 1, 2.

“ The wilderness and solitary place shall be glad for them ;

“ And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

“ It shall blossom abundantly,

“ And rejoice even with joy and singing ;



“ The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it,

“ The excellency of Carmel and of Sharon ;

“ They shall see the glory of the Lord,

“ And the excellency of our God.”

*Lebanon* and *Carmel* were among the most remarkable mountains of Palestine, or the Holy Land, and are, consequently, the most celebrated in the sacred poetry. *Lebanon* remarkable, as well for its height, as for its age, magnitude, and the abundance of the cedars which adorned its summit, exhibiting a striking and substantial appearance of strength and majesty. *Carmel*, rich and fruitful, abounding with vines, olives, and delicious fruits, in a most flourishing state, both by nature and cultivation, and displaying a delightful appearance of fertility, beauty, and grace. Each of them suggests a different general image, which the Hebrew poets adopt for different purposes. Thus, *Lebanon* is used, by a very bold figure, for the whole people of the Jews, or for the state of the Church, for Jerusalem, for the king of Assyria, and for his army ; for whatever, in a word, is remarkable, august, and sublime, even the divine glory and majesty : and, in the same manner, whatever possesses much fertility, wealth, or beauty, is called *Carmel*. The cultivation and watering of a barren and rocky soil is so frequently employed to denote the divine grace and spiritual endowments, that there is no necessity for any farther explanation of this figure ; nor are the images which follow less beautiful and clear.

To him who attentively reads and considers the whole poem, the order and arrangement of the subject will be more fully apparent. The passages which I have produced will, however, I apprehend, be sufficient to shew the kind of images, the style and co-



louring most according with the sacred poet's mind. They will, also, be sufficient, in some measure, to explain the manner in which he contrives to display in the strongest colours, the general nature, extent, and importance of events ; and, at the same time, to leave the particular situations, the events which are to come between, and all the lesser circumstances concealed under the bold and striking features of the description, till the accomplishment of the prophecy. Thus, in this prophecy, the particulars mentioned in the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 8th verses, without doubt, have their first fulfilment in the first advent of the Messiah, the miracles which were performed by him, the preaching of the Gospel, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. In the remainder, the circumstances and progress of the particular events are not yet unfolded ; for this prophecy, as I have already remarked, is, evidently, one of those which are not yet completely fulfilled, and of which the greater part, at least, is yet retained in the secret counsels of the Most High \*.]

The XXXVIth chapter begins what I have called the *fifth* part of the book of the prophet Isaiah, going on to the end of the XXXIXth chapter, and comprises what may be called the *historical* part of the book. It is written in quite a different style to the other parts, not being in poetry, as may be easily perceived on comparing the different parts : excepting, indeed, that this, also, contains two portions of poetry, namely, the answer of God to Sennacherib's blasphemy, beginning, in the 22d verse of the XXXVIIth chapter, with, " The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to

\* See Lowth on Hebrew Poetry, translated by Gregory, Lectures 20, and 6.



scorn;" to the end of the 35th verse of the same chapter; and what is called "The Writing of Hezekiah when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness," beginning at the 10th verse of the XXXVIIIth, to the end of the 20th verse of the same.

These chapters give an account of the invasion of Judea by Sennacherib, his blasphemy against God, Hezekiah's piety in referring the case to God, his gracious answer,—Hezekiah's sickness and prayer,—God's lengthening of his days,—his thanksgiving,—his transgression, and the captivity in Babylon foretold in consequence.

The history of the invasion of Sennacherib, and of the miraculous destruction of his army, which makes the subject of so many of Isaiah's prophecies, is very properly inserted here, as affording the best light to many parts of those prophecies, and as almost necessary to introduce the prophecy in the XXXVIIth chapter, being the answer of God to Hezekiah's prayer, which could not be properly understood without it. We had the same account in the 2d book of Kings, the XVIIIth, XIXth, and XXth chapters, except that the thanksgiving of Hezekiah on his recovery from sickness is not given there. As I spoke, at some length, upon the history of Hezekiah, when treating of this part of the 2d book of Kings, on the 13th Sunday after Trinity, I shall not enter upon it again, here, farther than to observe, that the sin of Hezekiah, and his humiliation on the message of God to him by the prophet, mentioned, both in that book, xx. 12—19., and in Isaiah xxxix., is more expressly set forth, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, 26. 30, 31., "But Hezekiah rendered not again, according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up; therefore there was wrath upon him and upon Judah



and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, (both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem) so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works. Howbeit, in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart."

I wish, also, to recall to your mind a remarkable circumstance which I then mentioned respecting our late beloved King. In the summer and autumn of the year 1803, this nation was threatened with invasion by Bonaparte, the emperor of France, who drew an immense army to his coast, and threatened and boasted,—nay he even went so far as to have a marble pillar erected in memory of his invasion of Britain \*. A fast day was appointed, in this nation, for the 19th of October †, when the XXXVIIth chapter of Isaiah was appointed for the first lesson at the morning service, and it was said, at the time, that it was at the desire of the King. But, whether this were so, or not, it is evident that it was intended to make a comparison between Sennacherib and Bonaparte, and Hezekiah and our King. The King, soon after, became afflicted both in body and mind; but,

\* If the blasphemy of Bonaparte against God was not equal to that of Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, yet the blasphemy of Bonaparte and his worshippers in setting him up as an idol was worse. Cambaceres called Bonaparte the Christ of Providence; the Prefect of Calais said, that God, to fix the peace of the earth, created Napoleon, and rested from his labours; and the Gazette of France called his reign the reign of the second resurrection of Christ. (See Grant's Hist. of the Church, Vol. IV. p. 428.)

† Mr. Grant, in his History of the Church, Vol. IV. p. 430, erroneously states, that this fast day was in *September*.



getting better, a Prayer of Thanksgiving for his amendment, and of Supplication for his complete recovery, was sent round to be used in our churches, in the February following ; and another fast day was appointed for the 25th of May, in the *Form of Prayer* for which, this Thanksgiving and Supplication was inserted ; and the first lesson for the morning service was the following chapter of Isaiah, the XXXVIIIth. But, before the day arrived, the King quite recovered, and an altered form of this was sent round, returning thanks for the King's complete recovery. Now, in God's answer to Hezekiah, by Isaiah, he says, respecting Sennacherib, xxxvii. 33, 34., " He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord." And Bonaparte proceeded not beyond his own coast. He came not into our city, which he boasted should be his, he never set his foot in our land, he never even embarked. By the way that he came over against " our water-walled" land, by the same he returned.

In respect to Hezekiah, God said, xxxviii. 5., " Behold I will add unto thy days *fifteen years* : " and our good king lived for *fifteen years* after this. This, I have said, was May 25, 1804, and our Hezekiah deceased January 29, 1820. Surely this is remarkable ! The king applies Hezekiah to himself—God, *in the event*, makes the same addition to his days. He grants to him and the nation, at their prayers, a like deliverance from their vaunting enemy. What is this but an acceptance of prayer, and a gracious and particular answer to it ?

But I must be drawing towards a conclusion, and



I have said nothing as yet upon the words which I have chosen for my text, xxxviii. 1. “ In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah, the prophet, the son of Amoz, came unto him, and said unto him, Set thine house in order : for thou shalt die and not live.”

[I have particularly selected these words on account of *a death* which took place in our parish, the week before the last, under rather remarkable circumstances ; but, in adverting to them, my object is to warn *the living*, rather than from a wish to say any thing respecting *the dead*. I touch, therefore, as lightly as may be upon his case. The life which our neighbour led is but too well known, and his quarrel with his minister, and his withdrawing from his Church. On this it may be observed, that, although *he* was highly to blame, yet there was *another*, his abettor, who was as much, or more so ; and who ought to have told him, that, instead of thinking his minister had dealt hardly by him, he ought to consider himself as under obligations to him. We censure severely, and justly, those who make differences in private families, amongst friends, or in communities ; but, perhaps, none are deserving of higher censure than those who make differences between a minister and his people ; the former affect chiefly our earthly happiness, but this, probably, the everlasting interests of an immortal soul. About two years and a half ago, it pleased God to visit him with affliction, with sickness.] God has not now particular and open communication with his ministers to send them on his messages ; but he speaks by his written Word, which is in all our hands, and, while *death* is uncertain, and may come



at any hour, to any man, his warning is always in force, "Set thine house in order."

[The minister sent him two books suitable for the sick, with a message, that he would call, if he wished to see him; but he returned them, saying, "he had books of his own, and he did not wish to see him." The patient continued, sometimes better and sometimes worse, till, lately, his sickness alarmingly increased, and death seemed certain, while there was no appearance of any religious impressions. Five days before his death, the minister called, and was admitted, indeed, to his bedside; but, on offering to pray by him, his services were refused, and he withdrew. The patient, however, had, happily, among those who attended upon him, a pious sister who remonstrated with him upon his conduct; and, the next morning, she came to request the minister's attendance. No time was lost; but the patient lay upon his death bed, in extreme weakness of body, and his voice too feeble to hold a conversation. All that could be done was to pray *by* him and *for* him; and to lay down, in the shortest and plainest manner, *the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer*. He whom he had before considered as his greatest enemy, the patient now looked upon as his best friend, he begged him to continue his visits, and said of prayer and reading the Scripture, "I love to hear it." He died on the fourth day; and he who had, once, been used to oaths and curses, now, as his attendants said, "went off like a lamb."

Well, then! may the wicked go on in their sins to within a few days of their death; and, when they lie upon the bed from which they are never to rise again, may they send for the minister, hear a few



prayers and a few chapters, and die in peace, and their friends feel assured, that they are numbered among the blessed? *This*, my brethren, is the *error*—and a most dangerous one—against which I wish to warn you; and in which, I think, this case gives you no encouragement. There is *hope* in respect to the deceased, but there is *no assured* hope. To see such a change wrought in any one, from what cause soever, is a happiness; happy though it proceed only from what is called *death staring him in the face*,—a view of death, judgment and hell opening before him;—but oh! how infinitely more happy, if it proceed from a conviction of sin, a conviction of the want of a Redeemer, a clear view of *One* in Jesus Christ. He *may* have been truly penitent, he *may* have cast himself at the feet of a crucified Redeemer, and God *may* have received his soul into bliss. I have repeatedly set before you, that, in true repentance, there is, *first*, a *conviction* of sin, a conviction that we are sinners, vile, miserable sinners, in the sight of God, unable of ourselves to do any thing good, and subject to his everlasting wrath. There must, *secondly*, be *contrition*, a deep sorrow for sin, not merely a sorrow that we have made ourselves subject to punishment,—to everlasting punishment,—but that we have offended a holy and loving God and Saviour. *Thirdly*, there must be *confession*. It is not sufficient to *feel*; we must *give utterance* to it. Open sins must be publicly confessed, secret ones confessed at least to God. And, *lastly*, there must be *conversion*, a turning away from sin, a leading of a new and holy life, and the making of restitution and reparation to all those against whom we have sinned. Now, we cannot *positively* say, that there was *any thing* of this in our neighbour. He was too



weak, too far gone, to hear, to ask, to explain himself. He *might* see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, he *might* feel sincere sorrow for his sins, he *might* renounce *self*, and look to the Saviour alone for acceptance, and *might wish* to make *restitution* and *reparation* to all whom he had ever wronged, and *wish* to lead a holy life;—and God may have *seen* this, and the sincerity of it, and have accepted the *purpose* for the *act*: but *we cannot know* it; and, were I to speak positively, or confidently, of him, as being *now* in a state of blessedness, I should be unfaithful to God whose minister I am, and to *you*, the flock whom he has committed to my care.

But,] *you*, my beloved brethren, are yet alive and in health, and God *now* calls loudly upon *you* by his word, and by me, [and by this example of our neighbour,] to “set your house in order.” Call your ways to remembrance, search out the very “ground of your heart” (Psalm cxxxix. 23.); *repent*—*confess* “with strong crying and tears” (Heb. v. 7.)—make *restitution*—and pray to God to give you grace to lead the residue of your life in his fear, and to his glory.—Then may you, indeed, say, in the words of Hezekiah, “O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live. Behold, for peace, I had great bitterness; but thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.” (Isaiah xxxviii. 16, 17.)



## SERMON LVI.

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS. ISAIAH XL—XLIII.

THE RESTORATION OF JUDAH—THE HARBINGER OF MESSIAH—  
THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL—THE FOLLY OF IDOLATRY—THE  
MESSIAH—EXPOSTULATION WITH ISRAEL—THE LORD OUR  
SAVIOUR—ISRAEL'S NEGLECT OF GOD.

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ISAIAH XLIII. 21, 22.

*This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my  
praise. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou  
hast been weary of me, O Israel.*

THE first lessons for the second Sunday after Christmas are the XL1st and the XLIIId; and, in my last discourse, I considered to the end of the XXXIXth chapter: I shall, now, therefore, begin with the XLth, and end with the XLIIId.

The XLth chapter begins what I have called the *sixth*, and last, part of the book of Isaiah. It comprises a series of prophecies, delivered, in all probability, towards the close of Hezekiah's reign, which are *twelve* in number, and the divisions of which will be noticed as we proceed.

These prophecies, taken together, constitute the most elegant part of the writings of the Old Testament; and are, at the same time, interspersed with many passages of the highest sublimity. The prophet, in the foregoing chapter, had delivered a very



explicit declaration of the destruction of the kingdom, and of the carrying captive of the royal house of David, and of the people, under the kings of Babylon. As the subject of the rest of his prophecies was to be chiefly *consolation*, he opens them with giving a promise of the restoration of the kingdom, and the return of the people from their captivity by the merciful interference of God in their favour. But the views of the prophet are not confined to this event: as the restoration of the royal family, and of the tribe of Judah, which would, otherwise, have soon become undistinguished from the others, and have been irrecoverably lost, was necessary, in the design and order of Providence, for the fulfilling of God's promises, of establishing a more glorious, and an everlasting kingdom, under the Messiah to be born of the tribe of Judah and family of David; the prophet connects these two events together, and hardly ever treats of the *one* without throwing in some intimations of the *other*; and, sometimes, is so fully possessed with the glories of the future more distant kingdom, that he seems to leave the more immediate subject of his commission almost out of the question.

The XLth and XLIst chapters constitute one prophecy, or discourse, which contains a promise of comfort to the people of God, interspersed with declarations of the infinite power and infinite wisdom of Jehovah, and a prediction of the restoration of the Jews from the captivity in Babylon by Cyrus.

The prophet begins, chapter XL., "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God;" that is, God saith this to the prophets during the captivity, and to all Christian ministers in future ages. "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that



her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned : for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins ;" not *double* to what she *deserved*, but double in proportion to God's severity in correcting other sinful nations, because she was more particularly favoured. It may have a reference to the law of paying double damages in some cases of transgression, mentioned Exod. xxii. 4.

Immediately, a harbinger is introduced, giving orders, as was customary in the march of eastern generals, to remove every hindrance, and prepare the way for them : " The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low ; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord," his glorious power and goodness, " shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

The harbinger, or cryer, gives orders, by solemn proclamation, to prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness ; to remove all obstructions before Jehovah marching through the desert ; through the wild, uninhabited, and otherwise-unpassable country. The deliverance of God's people from the captivity in Babylon is considered by him as parallel, or like, to the former deliverance of them from the Egyptian bondage. God was, then, represented as their King, leading them in person through the vast deserts, which lay in their way, to the promised land of Canaan. It is not merely for Jehovah himself, that, in both cases, the way was to be prepared, and all obstructions to be removed ; but for Jehovah marching in person at the head of his people.



Babylon was separated from Judea by an immense tract of country, which was one continued desert, that large part of Arabia called very properly *Deserta*, the desert. It is mentioned by Josephus \* as a remarkable occurrence, that Nebuchadnezzar having received the news of the death of his father, in order to make the utmost expedition, in his journey to Babylon, from Egypt and Phœnicia, set out with a few attendants, and passed through this desert. This was the nearest way homeward for the Jews ; and, whether they returned this way, or not, the first thing that would occur, on the proposal, or thought, of their return, would be the difficulty of this almost-impracticable passage. Accordingly, the proclamation for the preparation of the way is the most natural idea, and the most obvious circumstance, by which the prophet could have opened his subject.

The account given, by an ancient historian, of the marches of Semiramis, queen of Assyria, into Media and Persia, will give us a clear notion of the preparation of the way for a royal expedition : “ In her march to Ecbatane she came to the Zarcean mountain ; which extending many furlongs, and being full of craggy precipices and deep hollows, could not be passed without taking a great compass about. Being, therefore, desirous of leaving an everlasting memorial of herself, as well as of shortening the way, she ordered the precipices to be digged down, and the hollows to be filled up ; and, at a great expense, she made a shorter and more expeditious road, which, to this day, is called from her *the road of Semiramis*. Afterwards, she went into Persia, and all the other countries of Asia subject to her dominion ; and,

\* Antiq. x. 11., on the authority of Berosus.



wherever she went, she ordered the mountains and precipices to be levelled, raised causeways in the plain country, and, at a great expense, made the ways passable \*."

Plain as this literal, or first, sense of this prophecy is, we have, also, the authority of John the Baptist, and of our blessed Saviour himself, as recorded by three of the Evangelists, (Matt. iii. 3., xi. 10., Mark i. 2, 3., Luke iii. 4—6., vii. 27.) for explaining the beginning of the opening of the Gospel by the preaching of John the Baptist, and of the introducing of the kingdom of Messiah; who was to accomplish a much greater deliverance of God, Gentiles as well as Jews, from the captivity of sin and the dominion of death. And this we shall find to be the case in many following parts of this prophecy, where passages, evidently relating to the deliverance of the Jewish nation, brought about by Cyrus, are with good reason, and upon undoubted authority, to be understood of the redemption wrought for mankind by Christ. This *mystical allegory*, or *double sense*, as it is commonly called, of prophecy; the sacred writers of the New Testament clearly suppose, and they frequently frame their interpretation of passages of the Old Testament accordingly.

John the Baptist was born, probably, in the city of Hebron, but passed the chief part of his life in the wilderness of Judea, till the time of his being manifested to Israel. He preached in the same desert: it was a *mountainous* country; however, not entirely, and properly, a *desert*; for, though less cultivated than other parts of Judea, yet it was not uninhabited; Joshua (xv. 61, 62.) reckons six cities

\* Diodorus Siculus, B. II.—Lowth's Isaiah, 4to. Notes, p. 183—188.



in it. We are so prepossessed with the idea of John's living and preaching in the desert, or *wilderness*, that we are apt to consider this particular scene of his preaching as a very important and essential part of his history: whereas, I apprehend this circumstance to be no otherwise important, than as giving us a strong idea of the rough character of the man, which was answerable to the place of his education; and as affording a proper emblem of the rude state of the Jewish Church at that time; which was the true *wilderness* meant by the prophet, in which John was to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah\*; and their pride and prejudices and hardness of heart, were the crooked ways and rough places, which were to be made straight and levelled.

But I am encroaching too far upon what is rather to be said in treating the New Testament.

The prophet, then, introduces a Voice commanding him to make a solemn proclamation:

“The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of the Lord shall stand for ever.”

What is this, but a plain opposition of the *flesh* to the *spirit*; of the *carnal Israel* to the *spiritual*; of the *temporary* dispensation of *Moses*, to the *eternal* one of Christ? “You may be ready to conclude,” the prophet may be supposed to say, “by this introduction to my discourse, that my commission is only to comfort you with a promise of the restora-

\* Lowth's Isaiah, 4to. Notes, p. 188.



tion of your religion and government, of Jerusalem, of the Temple, and its services and worship in all its ancient splendour: these are earthly, temporary, shadowy, fading things, which shall soon pass away, and be destroyed forever; these are not worthy to engage your attention, in comparison of the greater blessings, the spiritual redemption, the eternal inheritance, covered under the veil of the former, which I have it in charge to unfold unto you. The law has only a shadow of good things, the Gospel is the substance. I promise you a restoration of the former; which, however, is only for a time, and shall be done away, according to God's original appointment: but, under that image, I give you a view of the latter; which shall never be done away, but shall endure for ever." This seems to be agreeable to St. Peter's interpretation of this passage of the prophet quoted by him, Ep. 1. chap. i. verses 24, 25., "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which, by the Gospel, is preached unto you." This is the same "word of the Lord," of which Isaiah speaks, which hath now been preached unto you by the Gospel. The *Law* and the *Gospel* are frequently opposed to one another by St. Paul, under the images of *flesh* and *spirit*: as, Gal. iii. 3., "Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"

The prophet, then, breaks out, verse 9., "O Zion, that bringest good tidings," or, "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion," "get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings," or, "O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem,"—"lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be



not afraid ; say unto the cities of Judah, BEHOLD YOUR GOD ! Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him ; behold, his reward is with him, and his work," or, recompense for his work, " before him. He," that is, the Messiah, who is the GOD whom they are to behold, " shall feed his flock like a shepherd : he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

At verse 12, the prophet enters into a magnificent description of the Almighty Jehovah : but our time will not allow me to read it.

The XL1st chapter, as I have already stated, is a continuation of the same prophecy, or discourse. In this and some of the following chapters, God gives a solemn challenge to the worshippers of idols, to shew such wisdom, power, and goodness in their gods, as he possessed ; in order to convince the Israelites of the folly of idolatry, and encourage their hope of deliverance from their captivity from Him alone.

He begins, " Keep silence before me, O islands ; and let the people renew their strength," that is, muster up all their arguments : " let them come near ; then let them speak : let us come near together to judgment." He, then, calls their attention to what he has done, " Who raised up the righteous man from the *East*, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings ? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow."

Commentators are divided in opinion as to *who* this *righteous man* is. Some supposing it to be *Abraham*, and others *Cyrus*. Those who say it was Abraham, say, that " the character of the righteous



man, or righteousness, agrees better with Abraham than with Cyrus," and that Cyrus "had nothing in his character to cause such an alarm among the idolaters," as is represented, verse 5—7\*. But Orton says †, "that it seems, rather, to refer to Cyrus, who is said, in prophetic language, to be raised up, that is, he should certainly be so: he is called *righteous*, because he was to execute God's righteousness in the destruction of Babylon," and the restoration of his people; and the consternation which Cyrus caused among the idols and their worshippers is fully set forth at the beginning of the XLVIth chapter. May not, however, *both* be intended, Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, the head of that nation who have preserved the true faith, and who will, in the end, be the cause, through the Holy One who has proceeded from him, of putting an end to all idolatry? and, also, Cyrus, who was the *restorer* of Israel from the captivity in Babylon, and was a type of *Him* who is finally to *restore* the remainder of the tribes of Israel, and deliver all mankind from the bondage of sin and Satan? Those who say, that Abraham only is intended in this passage, yet acknowledge that Cyrus is spoken of at the 25th verse, "I have raised up one from the *north* and he shall come: from *the rising of the sun* shall he call upon my name." Cyrus, by his father, was from Persia, which lay *east* of Babylon, and, by his mother, from Media, which lay *north*.

At the 6th verse of this chapter, God, by his prophet, begins to expose those who made idols, and bowed down to them, and trusted in them; and, at the 22d verse, he says, "Let them bring them forth,

\* Lowth, p. 194.

† Vol. V. p. 298, note.



and show us what shall happen : let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them ; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are : yea do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together ;” let them foretell future events, and inform us what prophecies they have delivered that have been accomplished ; that we may be struck with astonishment at such skill, and be led to worship you.

The XLII<sup>d</sup> and XLIII<sup>d</sup> chapters contain another prophecy or discourse. In this the advent of the Messiah, and the character and blessings of his kingdom are foretold ; for rejecting which the infidelity and blindness of the Jews are reproved. A remnant of them, however, it is promised, shall be preserved, and, in the end, restored to their own land. The taking of Babylon by Cyrus, and the restoration of the Jews are again foretold ; as, also, (perhaps) their return from their dispersion by the Romans ; and they are admonished to repent of those sins, which would, otherwise, bring the severest judgments of God upon them.

The prophet, speaking from Jehovah, begins the discourse,—the XLII<sup>d</sup> chapter and the 1<sup>st</sup> verse,—“ Behold my servant whom I uphold : mine elect in whom my soul delighteth ; I have put my spirit upon him : he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles ;” that is, “ he shall make known my will and law, which hitherto had been confined to the Jews.”—“ He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street,” as vain-glorious and contentious persons do ; he shall not come in a pompous, tumultuous manner, but instruct others



and vindicate himself with meekness. “A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench;” this is a proverbial expression for a gentle temper and conduct; more is implied than expressed; he will bear with, encourage, and help the weakest: “he shall bring forth judgment unto truth;” he shall make truth and righteousness victorious. “He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.” St. Matthew,—chapter xii. verse 17—21,—expressly tells us, that this was fulfilled in Christ; and, indeed, the words cannot fairly be applied to any other one. Who was ever so meek, and lowly, and gentle, and faithful? He and his apostles went on resolutely and cheerfully, till his religion was established, and the Gentiles received it as heartily, as if they had waited for it.

At the 10th verse, the prophet calls out, as from himself,

“Sing unto the Lord a new song,

“And his praise from the end of the earth,

“Ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein;

“The isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

“Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice,

“The villages that Kedar doth inhabit:

“Let the inhabitants of the rock sing,

“Let them shout from the top of the mountains.

“Let them give glory unto the Lord,

“And declare his praise in the islands.”

The coming of Christ, and the publication of his Gospel, should be matter of universal joy and praise. He is here represented as the delight of God’s soul, his servant whom he will protect and



own, and who was furnished with the Spirit without measure. He came on the kindest design, to rescue the Gentiles from ignorance, idolatry and other vices ; establishing a kingdom of truth, righteousness, and peace, and administering it in the most meek, gentle, and gracious manner. How justly are the nations called upon to sing unto the Lord, and celebrate his praises ! Let us bless God that the Gospel is sent to *us* Gentiles ; and declare his praise in this highly-favoured land.

The XLIII<sup>d</sup> chapter contains comfortable promises, that God would not forsake Israel as a body ; and he renews his exhortation with them for their ingratitude and neglect of his service. It begins, “ But, now, thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not : for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name ; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; through the rivers they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee ; ” that is, I will bring thee safe through the greatest dangers and difficulties, as David said, Psalm lxvi. 12., “ Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads : we went through fire and through water ; but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place : ” and, in allusion, likewise, to what had actually taken place, when the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea and the river Jordan, and over the burning sands of the deserts, God promises what he will yet do, when he leads them home from their captivity in Babylon. But the promise extends to them, not only as a nation, but to individuals, also, who confided in him ; and, not to them only, but to *all people in all*



*times.* The promise was with the three young men in the fiery furnace in Babylon ; and with St. Paul, when he was a night and a day in the deep, and thrice when he suffered shipwreck, (2 Cor. xi. 25.) ; and when his vessel was tempest-tossed on his way to Rome. (Acts xxvii.) And, if, at any time, it has *not* operated to the deliverance of martyrs from the flames, in *outward appearance*, yet it has *in effect*, in giving them, not only constancy to endure them, but, what was better,—grace to *rejoice* amidst them.

At the 11th verse, it is said, “ I, even I, am THE LORD, and *besides me* there is *no Saviour*.” And St. Peter, 2 Ep. iii. 18., calls JESUS CHRIST our LORD *and* SAVIOUR. But, unless JESUS CHRIST were God, even THE LORD JEHOVAH, as well as *man*, he could not be a SAVIOUR ; because THE LORD has declared, that there is NO SAVIOUR *beside himself*. It is, therefore, rightly observed by St. Paul, Phil. ii. 9., that God, in dignifying the *man Christ* with *the name of JESUS* “ hath given him a name *above every name*,” even that of A SAVIOUR, which is *his own name*, and such as can belong to no other. The argument drawn from this text will be equally convincing whichever way it be taken—JESUS CHRIST is A SAVIOUR, therefore, he is JEHOVAH, THE LORD—JESUS CHRIST is JEHOVAH, therefore he is THE SAVIOUR \*.

But we must be drawing to a conclusion : At the 21st verse, God says, in the words I have chosen for my text, “ This people have I formed for myself ; they shall,” or, rather, they *should*, “ shew forth my praise. But thou hast *not* called upon me, O Jacob ; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.” Let *us* consider whether *we* have not deserved a like reproach.

\* See Jones on the Trinity, p. 3. § 4.



God goes on to reprove the Israelites, "Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense:" I have required nothing hard nor unreasonable. "Thou hast brought me no sweet cane," or incense, "with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices;" in sacrifices the fat was burned, or offered, to the Lord; so that it is as much as to say, thou hast neglected sacrifices, or brought only lean ones: "but thou hast made Me to *serve* with thy sins," to undergo a sort of bondage, and brought a reproach upon me and my service, "thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities."

God does not require of *us* troublesome and expensive sacrifices and offerings: but, let us ask ourselves, Do we duly render to him "the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving?" (Psalm cxvi. 17. Hebrews xiii. 15.) Is our "prayer" duly "set forth in his sight as the incense, and the lifting up of our hands" every evening "as an evening sacrifice?" (Psalm cxli. 2.) Do we attend his worship and ordinances? Do we duly read his holy Word at home? And are we careful, by a holy life, to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things?" (Titus ii. 10.) Do we shew a regard to his ministers and people? Do we "honour the Lord with our substance, and with the first fruits of all our increase?" (Prov. iii. 9.)

We might, perhaps, bring the question closer, and say to some, *What* have you *ever* done for God? What have you ever done from a motive of really serving and pleasing *Him*?

Our relation to God demands a suitable behaviour from us. He hath created us as men, redeemed us



as Christians, and shewn his love by giving his Son for our ransom. And why hath he done all this for us, but that we might "shew forth his praise?" Let us, then, do it with our lips and by our lives; adore his gracious perfections; proclaim them to others; and live as the reformed and the redeemed of the Lord. Let us often recollect our relation and obligations to Him, that we may live answerable to them, and "shew forth the praises of Him, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light \*."

\* Orton, Vol. V. p. 310.



## SERMON LVII.

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FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.—ISAIAH XLIV—XLIX.

PROMISES OF REDEMPTION—YOUNG PERSONS DEDICATED TO THE LORD—THE FIRST AND THE LAST—THE FOLLY OF IDOLATRY—CYRUS—THE LORD—A PLURALITY OF WORLDS—CHRIST—THE IDOLS CARRIED CAPTIVE—SHEW YOURSELVES MEN—THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON—BE NOT HIGH-MINDED—LABOUR IN VAIN—THE ACCEPTED TIME—GOD'S PEOPLE ENGRAVEN ON HIS PALMS—KINGS AND QUEENS THE NURSING-FATHERS AND NURSING MOTHERS OF THE CHURCH.

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### ISAIAH XLVI. 8.

*Remember this, and shew yourselves MEN : bring it again to mind,  
O ye transgressors.*

WE have considered the book of Isaiah to the end of the XLIIIrd chapter. The first lessons for this day are the XLIVth and the XLVIth ; and, on Sunday next, the LIst and the LIIId ; and, as the LIst is only a *part* of a discourse, or prophecy, of which the Lth is the beginning,—I shall, now, begin with the XLIVth, and consider to the end of the XLIXth. These *six* chapters contain *four* discourses, or prophecies, of which the XLIVth and XLVth chapters form one, the XLVIth and XLVIIth another ; the XLVIIIth is a discourse by itself, and so is the XLIXth.

The prophecy, consisting of the XLIVth and XLVth chapters, contains promises of redemption, and of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, mixed



with a beautiful and forcible exposure of the folly of idolatry. The prophet then announces *by name* their future deliverer, *Cyrus*; and, according to his usual manner, he makes a transition to the greater work of God in the conversion of the Gentiles to the Gospel, and the final triumph of it over Anti-christ.

The XLIVth chapter begins, “ Yet, now, hear, O Jacob, my servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen : Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee ; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant, and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.” The word *Jesurun*, mentioned also Deut. xxxii. 15., is used to denote *Israel*, and signifies an upright and holy people. The prophet proceeds, “ For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground : I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed,” to cure them of their idolatry, “ and my blessing upon thy offspring ;” all spiritual blessings under the Gospel : “ And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses ;” as plants and herbs do in green and fruitful meadows.

It is a very pleasing sight to see young people giving themselves up to the Lord, and performing those promises which are made in their name at their *baptism*, and which they take upon themselves and renew when they are *confirmed*. When undertaken with a due regard to God, it is a good security for their future regular behaviour, their usefulness, and comfort. Let young persons, then, be engaged to give themselves up to the Lord and to his Church, and let all, especially parents, earnestly pray for the communications of the Spirit, which are necessary



to excite them to self-dedication, and to promote their fruitfulness in every good work.

The prophet goes on, at verse 5., “One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel;” they shall desire to be joined to God’s people. This is an allusion to a custom among soldiers, in those days, who sometimes received a mark upon their hands to signify to what commander they belonged: and, thus, while some wear, according to Rev. xiii. 16., “the mark of the *beast*” on their right hands, these shall mark their hands with the name of JEHOVAH.

At the 6th verse, the prophet says, “Thus saith the Lord, the king of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of Hosts; I am the *first*, and I am the *last*; and besides me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people?” that is, *Israel*, for no other nation can trace their history so high: “and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them;” heathen idols cannot do this, therefore *I* am to be feared, trusted, and worshipped, and not they.

It appears from Rev. xxii. 13., and i. 8, 13—17., that Jesus Christ is the *first* and the *last*, the *Alpha* and *Omega*; and, therefore, He who is here speaking as “the Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts,” and “besides” whom “there is no God,” is the Lord Jesus Christ, One with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God blessed for ever. This is one of those strong and decisive passages in favour of the Divinity of Christ, and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which



I mentioned in my discourse on Trinity Sunday, and which should ever be borne in mind. And, again, at the 24th verse, it is said, "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens *alone*; that spreadeth forth the heavens by *myself*;" and, so forth. And, Psalm xxxvi. 6., it is said, "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the *breath*"—the Hebrew says *the Spirit*, "of his mouth," so that the world was created by the Lord, the Word and the Spirit, Three Persons, each of them Divine, and who constitute ONE ALONE GOD, the Holy, Blessed, Glorious and Eternal Trinity, from everlasting to everlasting \*.

But we must return to the 9th verse of this XLIVth chapter. From thence, to the end of the 20th verse, the prophet sets forth, in rather a humorous manner, the folly of those who make and worship idols, warming themselves, and cooking, with a part of the materials, and bowing down to the other, which has not power even to prevent their being weary, thirsty and hungry.

The proneness of the Israelites, and of the heathens, too, to idolatry seems wonderful to *us*, who are not accustomed to bow down to *stocks* and *stones*; but few people, comparatively, consider, that every unregenerate man sets up *some idol* in his *heart*, something *in the place of God*, and which has his *services*. As long as we are only *flesh*, we follow after the works of the flesh,—eating, drinking, dress, sports and pastimes,—riches, honour, fame;—but, when we become renewed,—spiritual,—we seek God

\* See Jones's Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity, sixth edition, p. 2, 69.



as our SUPREME GOOD, and do his works; and all those other things are held as of but little moment,—as nothing.

The prophet continues speaking from the Lord, and setting forth his attributes and power, and says, that He is the Lord, “that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: That saith to the deep, Be dry,” when he delivered Israel out of Egypt, “and I will dry up thy rivers;” alluding to the expedient used by Cyrus, when he took Babylon, in turning the river Euphrates into another channel: “That saith of *Cyrus*, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.” The prophecy goes on in the next chapter,

“Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him;” or whom I hold fast, or lead, by the right hand, that I may subdue nations before him; “and I will loosen the loins of kings,” weaken their power, “to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:” Babylon had an hundred gates of brass, and on the night when Babylon was taken, it being a night of feasting and riot, the gates leading from the streets to the river were left open, as no danger was apprehended from that quarter; and Cyrus turning the river into another channel, the way was open for his soldiers to enter. “And,” he says, “I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places; that thou mayest



know, that I the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel."

Here we have *Cyrus* foretold *by name*, nearly two hundred years before he was born. The *name* signifies the *sun*, the *ruler*, *lord*\*; and the King of kings here calls him his shepherd, because he was to lead and protect his flock. It would greatly encourage the Israelites in Babylon, when they first heard of the name of *Cyrus*, as they must have done long before his conquest of that empire. Their hopes must have encreased with every victory of his which they heard of; and, when he arrived with his army before Babylon, they must have been raised to an intense anxiety: though, even here, their patience was tried, as it was ten years, from his first arrival before Babylon, to his taking of the city.

This remarkable prophecy has justly engaged the admiration of heathens, as well as Christians; and gives at once a strong and sublime idea of God's power and foreknowledge. Josephus says, that this prophecy was shewed to Cyrus, and that he was much affected with it; he, therefore, honestly acknowledges, Ezra i. 2, "The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah."

God goes on to declare his power to Cyrus, xlv. 5., "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides me: I girded thee" with authority and power "though thou hast not known me: That they may know, from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and

\* See Parkhurst's Greek Lexicon, *Kypios*.



create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I, the Lord, do all these things;" I am the supreme governor of the natural and moral world. The ancient Persians did not believe that there was only One Supreme God, but that there were *two* independent principles, or *beings*, who were represented by *light* and *darkness*, the one *good* and the other *evil*, by one or other of which all things were made, and who were in constant opposition the one to the other. God, therefore, asserts that he created *light*, and *darkness*, (which is only the absence of light,) and is superior to, and is the God of, *these*.

He proceeds, at the 13th verse, "I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price, nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts. Thus saith the Lord, The labour," or wealth, "of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia, and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no" other "God." Cyrus, having conquered Egypt and part of Arabia, assisted the Israelites to rebuild and beautify the temple out of the spoils of those nations; and many became proselytes, and were brought to acknowledge the only true God, when they saw that he appeared so wonderfully for the Jews. The treasures too which Cyrus found in Babylon were immense, much of it the spoils of the Jews; and which was returned to them.

At the 18th verse, he says, "thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God himself that formed



the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited;” much less, then, will he suffer Judea, his own inheritance, to lie desolate. On this, Orton observes, in his Exposition, “The hint, that is given us in verse 18, should raise our ideas of the grandeur of God’s works, and of the number of his rational creatures. ‘He created not the earth in vain; he formed it to be inhabited;’ intimating, that, if it were not inhabited, it would have been created in vain. And, from hence, we may fairly argue, that the other planets are inhabited by rational creatures, as well as ours; though we know nothing of their particular rank and nature. This appears to be a just, noble, and delightful thought; and gives us a high idea of the greatness, magnificence and goodness of God. It may be part of the delightful employment of good men, when they leave this earth, to travel from world to world, to learn more of God’s works and creatures, that they may for ever love and adore him\*.”

At the 23d verse, he says, “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear.” And, Rom. xiv. 10, 11., the Apostle says, “We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ: For it is

\* Vol. V. p. 320. The reader who wishes for information on this interesting subject may consult FONTENELLE’S *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*, a very entertaining work, though written sometimes in too flippant a style.—ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΣ, ΕΙΣ ΜΕΣΙΤΗΣ Or An Attempt to shew how far the Philosophical Notion of A *Plurality of Worlds* is consistent, or not so, with the Language of The Holy Scriptures. In one Vol. 8vo. 1801.—and especially DR. CHALMERS’ *Discourses on Astronomy*.



written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess unto God." And St. Paul, also, says, Heb. vi. 13., that God swears by *Himself*, for this reason, "because he can swear by no greater." It is CHRIST, then, it seems, who swears *by himself* in this passage of Isaiah, and *that* because there is *no greater*. Christ, therefore, is the GREAT ALONE GOD, ONE with the FATHER, JEHOVAH\*.

The XLVIth and XLVIIth chapters, as I have already stated, form another prophecy, or discourse, in which the prophet, lest the Israelites should be led to worship the idols of Babylon, or fear their power, sets forth their vanity; and foretells, that they should be carried captive, in terms as if the business was actually now going on. The folly of worshipping them is, then, strikingly contrasted with the attributes and perfections of Jehovah; and the destruction of Babylon is farther denounced.

The XLVIth chapter, the 1st lesson at this evening's service, begins, "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth!" These were the favourite gods of Babylon. They had been *men*, and had been *deified*, or considered as gods after their deaths. *Bel* signifies *lord*, and *Nebo prophet*, and the names of their princes were formed out of them, as Bel-shazzar, and Nebo-chadnezzar. The prophet continues, "Their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity;" that is, these gods shall be led away, and, so far from delivering

\* See Jones on the Trinity, p. 31.



their worshippers, shall be a grievous weight to the weary beasts that carry them.

But unto the "house of Jacob" he says, "even to your old age I am *he*;" that is, your God; "and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you;" I formed you into a nation, brought you out of Egypt, and protected you; and I will take the same care of you still.

This promise to Israel "affords abundant comfort to every aged Christian, that God will be the same God to them as ever; will bear, and carry, and deliver them, amidst all their dangers and infirmities. He who made them, and has been the guide of their youth, will be the support of their old age! It becomes them, therefore, *to thank God, and take courage*\*."

At the 5th verse, God says, "To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?" He then sets forth *how* they come by their gods, "They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble." He, then, adds, in the words I have taken for my text, "Remember this, and shew yourselves MEN: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors," who have been guilty of idolatry. God, here, calls upon them to remember, and con-

\* Orton, Vol. V. p. 324.



sider what belongs to their character, as MEN, as rational beings, as beings endowed with immortal souls, intended to follow after higher things in life, and, what is their superior destination, for eternity. So, my brethren, let me call upon *you* to “remember”—“and shew yourselves MEN.” For *what* were *you* born into this world? To eat, and to drink, to dress, and take pastimes,—to labour and carry on your business? These are all very well, as *means*, but *not* as the *end*. And how many go beyond these, and are “transgressors,” lead lives of sin! No, my brethren, God sent you into this world for far other ends than these: To “work out your own salvation,” (Phil. ii. 12.): to trace God in his *works*, and in his *word*: to know our fallen state from that in which we were created, and of the restoration to it through Jesus Christ the righteous. You are sent hither as MEN, to benefit your fellow creatures, to train up your children to God and heaven: to instruct the ignorant, to benefit the destitute, to relieve the oppressed, to resist the oppressor. He who leaves the world, without its being benefited by him, “it had been good for that man, if he had not been born.” (See Matt. xxvi. 24.)

It may be proper to observe, on the 10th and 11th verses, that, when God says, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure; calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country;” what is here translated *a ravenous bird*, should have been translated *an eagle*, and means *Cyrus*, who had the figure of an eagle carried as a standard with his army, an emblem of royalty, and valour and victory; as *eagles* were, afterwards, in the Roman army; to which our



Lord alludes, (Matt. xxiv. 28. Luke xviii. 37.) when he says, “wheresoever the carcase is, there will *the eagles* be gathered together.”

The XLVIIth chapter foretells the destruction of Babylon, after having inflicted many cruelties upon the Israelites; and this prediction is the more remarkable, as there was no difference, at that time, between Judah and Babylon; but, on the contrary, the king had sent ambassadors to Hezekiah, to congratulate him upon his recovery; when Hezekiah shewed them his riches, and, probably, excited their envy and their avarice.

Babylon is here called upon as a “virgin” a city which had never yet been conquered, to sit and mourn in the dust. At the 5th verse, it is said, “Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, *the lady of kingdoms*,” the largest and most powerful empire. “I was wrath with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient,” or aged, “hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. And thou saidst, *I shall be a lady for ever*: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it;” the uncertainty of all human affairs, and the consequences of pride and self-confidence. Nations, as well as individuals, should attend to the Apostle’s charge, Rom. xi. 20., (see also 1 Tim. vi. 17.) “Be not high-minded, but fear.”

It is under these impressions, that I never hear, or think upon, without pain and fear, the favourite *national song*, in which, perhaps, thousands sometimes join in chorus, and sing, “Britons never will be slaves,”—“Thou shalt flourish great and free,”—



“ Still more majestic shalt thou rise, more dreadful from each foreign stroke,”—“ Thee haughty tyrants ne’er shall tame,”—“ All thine shall be the subject main, and ev’ry shore it circles thine.”—These are vaunting and presumptuous expressions. It has pleased God, hitherto, to protect, and enrich, and aggrandize us wonderfully. But, if we vaunt and presume, and say, “ *I shall be a lady for ever,*” it may please God to “ sell us into the hand” of an enemy, (Judges iv. 2.) and bring us to “ the ground,”—“ in the dust,”—“ silent,”—and “ into darkness \*.”

The XLVIIIth chapter is a prophecy, or discourse, by itself, in which the prophet, having reproved and threatened the Chaldeans in the former chapters, proceeds to reprove the Jews for their obstinate attachment to idolatry, which would infallibly involve them in the severest calamities ; but he, likewise, promises their deliverance in the end from them.

It may be observed on this chapter, that, at the 12th verse, he speaks, who is “ the first” and “ the last,” that is, as I observed before, (p. 364.) JESUS CHRIST ; and, at the 16th verse, he says, “ the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me.” Here, then, is another of those passages which set forth the Three Persons in the unity of the Godhead †. And, at the 17th verse, he says, “ Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel ; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit,” that is by thy afflictions, “ which *leadeth thee* by the way that

\* It was under these impressions, that, twenty years ago, the author altered this song, giving it the form of an acknowledgment and wish, or prayer, and printed it in the second Volume of his Collection of Songs, 1806.

† See Jones on the Trinity, p. 60.



thou shouldst go." But, John x. 3., we are told that *Christ*, the Shepherd, "calleth his own sheep by name, and *leadeth* them out." And, again, Romans viii. 14., "As many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Here, then, again, it seems, that the Lord God, Christ and the Spirit, all *lead* the people of God \*.

At the 22d verse are these important words, "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked;" though the wicked share in the blessings of their deliverance, and return with them, yet they shall have no lasting peace; they will still have reason to look upon God as their enemy, amidst all their prosperity.

The XLIXth chapter, (which is appointed by the Church, as the first lesson at evening service, on the Epiphany, the day on which we commemorate the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles,) is, also, a prophecy, or discourse, by itself; it introduces the Messiah in person, declaring the full extent of his commission, foretelling the unbelief and rejection of the Jews, the triumphant state of the Church, and, particularly, of the Jews on their conversion to the Gospel.

After having stated, that the Lord had "called him from the womb," as he had by the prophets and by the angel who announced his birth to the blessed virgin, and had "made his mouth," or preaching, "like a sharp sword," had "hid him in the hollow of his hand," and made him "a polished shaft," and kept him carefully "in his quiver," and said, "Thou art my servant, O Israel," the representative of his people Israel, or his Church, "in whom I will be

\* See Jones on the Trinity, p. 77.



glorified," he says, "Then I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain;" I have been rejected by the Jews, and few of them have believed: "yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God."

"It is no new thing for faithful ministers to complain of want of success. They labour, take pains, and are diligent in their work, spend their health and strength in endeavouring to do good; yet little good is done. It is a most discouraging circumstance; but it was the case with our Master, though 'never man spake as he did;' and this is *our* encouragement, as it was *his*, that 'our work is with the Lord, and our reward with our God:' he will not forget it; but will proportion his reward, not to our *success*, but to our *fidelity* \*."

At the 8th verse, he says, "Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee." And St. Paul, in quoting this, 2 Cor. vi. 2., says, in the way of commentary, "behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation."—"God heard and assisted his Son, that he might execute his work, and preach reconciliation. Therefore, while the Gospel sounds in *our* ears, is "the time" when *we* may be "accepted," and "the day" when *we* may be "*saved*." No one is certain of any time but *the now*; and even that, while we speak, is slipping through our hands. "Let us, therefore, attend to it; for, when our time on earth ends, there is no other 'accepted time,' no other 'day of salvation.' *To-day, therefore, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts* †."

\* Orton, Vol. V. p. 333.

† Ditto, p. 334.



[At the 13th verse, the prophet says, "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted;" let the whole creation rejoice in the prospect of this event. "But Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." This was the language of the Jews in their captivity; as if they had said, What hope can we have of such a time, when, at present, we are so afflicted and sunk? God graciously answers, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget," such a thing, though highly unnatural, yet *may*, and sometimes *does, happen*: "yet will I *not* forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands;" the thoughts of thee are as constantly present to my mind, as if thy name was written there; "thy walls," that is, thy *broken* walls, "are continually before me."

This expression of engraving them upon the palms of their hands may be illustrated by a custom which prevails amongst some nations, (and indeed very much among our own common sailors,) of marking themselves, by pricking letters and figures with a needle, and rubbing in some colouring matter. Thus the Jews used to imprint upon their flesh a figure of the Temple, in order, at all times, to bring it to their remembrance. "Now, says God, I have you and all my children, imprinted thus upon my heart and on my arms. (Cant. viii. 6.) I have set you there as a seal, or signet, which shall operate, at all times, to remind me of you, and to interest me in your favour: yea, I have graven you upon the palms of my hands;" so that "I can never open my



hand to dispense blessings to any of my creatures, but I must instantly behold your name, and be stirred up to supply your every want \*.”]

[I have, twice, already, in the course of these Sermons on the Bible, had occasion to notice what is said by some of our *dissenting brethren*, that, in signing the forehead of a child, in *baptism*, with the sign of *the cross*, we put upon it *the Devil's mark*, alluding to Rev. xiv. 9.; and I have shewn, from Rev. vii. 3. ix. 4. xiii. 16. xiv. 1. xxii. 4., that the children of God have his mark upon their foreheads and their hands, as well as the Devil's children his. And, here, we see, that even God himself is pleased to represent himself as engraving an image, or picture, upon his own hands, even *his people*. Blessed, then, must all those be, who bear the sign, or mark, or seal, of God upon their *foreheads* and their *hands*, if they do but bear them upon their *HEARTS* likewise.]

The remainder of the chapter relates to the restoration of the Jews and the punishment of their oppressors; but in terms which suit better to their complete restoration under the Messiah, and also to the extension of the Gospel Church.

I will not close this discourse without making a short remark upon that part of the 23d verse, where it is said, “Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers.” We may say with truth, that, though our Church is not without spots, yet is it one of the purest upon earth, and it owes its purity and prosperity very much to the piety and bounty of several of our kings and queens; amongst whom must be mentioned the names of Alfred, of

\* Simeon's Hor. Hom. Vol. V. p. 383.



Edward the Third, of Henry the Fifth and the Sixth, of Edward the Sixth, of James the First and Charles the First, of William the Third, and the Georges ; and, of queens, most especially Elizabeth, Mary the wife of William the Third, of Anne, of Caroline, and our late Queen Charlotte, whose influence, it is said, raised to the hierarchy one of the greatest ornaments of the Church in this our age, the pious and the excellent *Bishop Porteus*, one of the most strenuous opposers of French infidelity when at its greatest height. And

May God dispose the heart of our present gracious Sovereign to continue his fatherly care to the Church, to reform it from its abuses, to defend it from its enemies, and to cherish it in all purity and godliness; that, when CHRIST, the Bridegroom, shall come to claim his own, she may be found as “a bride adorned for her husband,” (Rev. xxi. 2.) in whom he may justly take delight.



## SERMON LVIII.

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.—ISAIAH L—LIII.

THE LORD DIVORCED FROM HIS CHURCH—MESSIAH SUFFERING  
—THE HUMBLE ENCOURAGED, THE PROUD WARNED—THE  
RIGHTEOUS NOT TO BE AFRAID OF THE WICKED—THE RES-  
TORATION OF THE JEWS—THE PREACHERS OF SALVATION—  
DELIVERANCE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD—MESSIAH SUFFERING  
—MESSIAH SMITTEN FOR US.

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ISAIAH liii. 5, 6.

*He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him : and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

THE portion of the book of Isaiah which we have this day to consider is the Lth, to the end of the LIIId chapter. These four chapters contain *two* prophecies, or discourses, the first consisting of the Lth, LIst, and to the end of the 12th verse of the LIId chapter. The second prophecy, or discourse, begins at the 13th verse of the LIId chapter, and goes on to the end of the LIIId.

The first discourse foretells the rejection of the Jews for their rejection of Jesus Christ, whose sufferings and exaltation are foretold. And, still keeping the Great Deliverer in view, the prophet exhorts the faithful Jews to trust in Him, and foretells their fu-



ture restoration after the captivity in Babylon, and their dispersion by the Romans, as also their conversion to Christianity.

The Lth chapter begins, "Thus saith the Lord," that is, to the captives in Babylon, "Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away?" representing the Jewish Church as their mother, and, alluding to the power which husbands then had to put away their wives, God inquires for the *bill of divorce*, in which the reasons would appear why they were rejected: "or, which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?" This is an allusion to the practice of persons, when oppressed with debt, selling themselves, or their children, to their creditors, as was frequently done among the Jews, as we see in the case of the poor widow, mentioned 2 Kings iv. 1., the creditor came to take her two sons to be bondmen, and Matt. xviii. 25, the Lord of the servant, who could not pay him his ten thousand talents, "commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made." But *this*, says God, here, cannot be my case; I am not urged by any such necessity, I am not in debt to the Chaldeans, or Romans. "Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away;" that is, you sold yourselves for the gratification of your lusts, and were put away for your own folly and wickedness.

At the 4th verse, the Messiah is introduced, declaring his willingness to learn and teach; and, at the 5th verse, to suffer. That part of this chapter, beginning at the 5th verse, to the end, is appointed for the Epistle on the Tuesday before Easter. At the 6th verse, he says, "I gave my back to the smiters,



and my cheek to them that plucked off the hair : I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” This Christ, Luke xviii. 31—33, expressly applies to the Son of Man, to himself, “ Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully intreated, and spitted on : and they shall scourge him, and put him to death :” all this is surprising ! but he adds—“ and the third day he shall rise again.” This is more surprising still ! but these things we shall consider more fully when we come to treat of the New Testament.

The Messiah goes on, verse 7, “ For the Lord God will help me ; therefore shall I not be confounded : therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me ;” God is at hand to vindicate my innocence ; “ who will contend with me ? let us stand together : who is mine adversary ? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me ; who is he that shall condemn me ?” It is, probably, to this passage that St. Paul alludes, when he says, Rom. viii. 33, 34, “ Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect ? It is God that justifieth : who is he that condemneth ?”

At the 9th verse, he says, “ Lo, they all shall wax old, as a garment ; the moth shall eat them up ;” Herod, Pilate, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the wicked Jews, the persecutors of Christ, shall be destroyed.

The following verse is addressed to every humble Jew, and to every humble Christian also : “ Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the



voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ?” though he suffers hardships, and is exercised with afflictions, and doubts, and fears, “ let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God ;” upon the goodness of God, and his faithfulness to his covenant. On the other hand, confusion and destruction are threatened to proud sinners. “ Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks ; walk in the light of your own fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand ; ye shall lie down in sorrow ;” this is an allusion to a benighted traveller, who lights a fire to warm himself, and to keep off beasts of prey, and then kindles a torch to light him on his way, and to serve as a guard from the wild beasts ; but it goes out, leaves him in darkness, and exposed to many dangers : so, those who seek their happiness and safety in worldly means, and neglect God, or trust in the merits of their own righteousness, shall be disappointed.

The LIst chapter, the first lesson at this morning’s service, is a continuation of the same prophecy, or discourse, and is designed to encourage the Jewish captives, in the first place, and all persons, in all ages, in the second, to trust in God’s promises ; especially in those relating to Christ ; assuring them, that he would pity their misery, and help them ; having given sufficient proofs of his power in his former dealings with that people. I have already read the chapter, and the time will not allow me to read it all again, and it is difficult to select passages, where all is grand, or beautiful, and consoling. We will, however, take a few sentences. It begins, “ Harken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord : look unto the rock whence



ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit," the quarry, "whence ye are digged;" remember your small beginning and low estate. "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone," when a single person, who had no family, "and blessed him, and increased him;" and, therefore, am able to do great things for you still.

At the 6th verse, he says, "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law;" who love it, and obey it; "fear ye not the reproach of men," of wicked men, "neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For," as he had said before, (L. 9.), "the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool," or, like a woollen garment: "but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation."

Such is the confidence we are to hold against the wicked. However bold, however malignant they may be, still we are not to fear them, still we are to trust in God, and commend ourselves to his Almighty protection. Though a man should be wicked enough to intend the ruin of a righteous man, and though he should be depraved and shameless enough to say, "I will ruin you, if you do not *so*, or *so*; and, if I cannot ruin *you*, I will ruin your *son* \*;" still God says,

\* Few people, however wicked, are so shameless as to avow such an intention; but, in the parish in which these sermons were preached, there lived one who had said this to persons; from the wife of one of whom the author was told it, and from the son of another.



at the 12th verse, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?" it is ineffectual, vanished, and gone at once.

In the LIId chapter, the same prophecy, or discourse, is continued to the end of the 12th verse; it sets forth the happy change made in the state of the Jews by their return from their captivity, as a type of the more important deliverance by the gospel, and the still farther restoration of the Jews from their general dispersion.

The chapter begins, "Awake, awake; put on strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city;" resume thy former strength and dignity: "for, henceforth, there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean;" there shall no more be idolatry within thee. "Shake thyself from the dust," where thou hast sat as a mourner; "arise and sit down" on thy throne, "O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion;" take all prudent methods to recover thy liberty, and gain the favour of thy conquerors. "For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought;" you have parted with your liberty only to enjoy your sins, and have got nothing by it; "and ye shall be redeemed without money;" Cyrus shall deliver you freely, without ransom, or tribute. "For, thus saith the Lord God, My people went down aforetime into Egypt, to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed



them without cause," and I delivered them from both. "Now, therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, that my people is taken away for nought?" what claim have the Chaldeans to keep my people in bondage, whom they have taken away without cause? "They that rule over them make them to howl, saith the Lord; and my name continually every day is blasphemed;" they are cruelly used, and God is blasphemed, as if he had cast them off, or was unable to help them. "Therefore my people shall know my name," my power, "therefore they shall know in that day, that I am he that doth speak: behold it is I," who am come to fulfil my promise.

The prophet breaks out, at the 7th verse, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth SALVATION; that saith unto Zion, THY GOD REIGNETH." In order to understand this fully, you must suppose the watchman, standing on his watch-tower, on the anxious look-out, when he discovers afar off, on the mountains, the messenger bringing the expected, and much-wished-for news of the deliverance from the captivity in Babylon. He immediately spreads the joyful tidings, and, with a loud voice, proclaims, that Jehovah is returning to Zion, to resume his residence on his holy mountain, which, for some time, he seemed to have deserted.

But this is not all: St. Paul, Rom. x. 15, applies this to the publishing of the gospel by Christ and his apostles, "How beautiful are the feet of them, that preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." And these good things are the publishing SALVATION, and that OUR GOD REIGNETH. What good-tidings can be compared to this, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?" (1 Tim. i. 15.)



I will not restrain myself from quoting the last two verses of a beautiful hymn \*, which, in the first two, sets forth the unhappiness of those many nations who “ bow down to wood and stone :” when it proceeds,

Shall *we*, whose souls are lighted  
 With wisdom from on high,  
 Shall *we* to man benighted  
 The lamp of life deny ?  
 Salvation ! Oh Salvation !  
 The joyful sound proclaim,  
 Till each remotest nation  
 Has learnt Messiah’s name.  
 Waft, waft, ye winds, his story ;  
 And you, ye waters, roll,  
 Till, like a sea of glory,  
 It spreads from pole to pole ;  
 Till o’er our ransom’d nature  
 The Lamb for sinners slain,  
 Redeemer, King, Creator,  
 In bliss returns to reign.

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\* By the late Right Reverend Reginald Heber, Lord Bishop of Calcutta. The first two stanzas are,

From Greenland’s icy mountains,  
 From India’s coral strand,  
 Where Afric’s sunny fountains  
 Roll down their golden sand,  
 From many an ancient river,  
 From many a palmy plain,  
 They call us to deliver  
 Their land from error’s chain.  
 What tho’ the spicy breezes  
 Blow soft o’er Ceylon’s isle ;  
 Tho’ ev’ry prospect pleases,  
 And only man is vile ;  
 In vain with lavish kindness  
 The gifts of God are strown ;  
 The heathen, in his blindness,  
 Bows down to wood and stone.



We see, then, how “the glad tidings of salvation” should be received. The Gospel brings us news of a greater deliverance than that of the Jews from Babylon; a deliverance from the captivity of sin and Satan; a message of peace with God, and the prospect of eternal life. We, now, see heavenly truths clearly, and enjoy the favour of God. How thankfully, then, should these glad tidings be received, and how welcome should Christian ministers be who publish them. They should be “esteemed highly in love for their work’s sake,” (1 Thess. v. 13.;) and we should earnestly pray, that they may be spread over the whole world, that “all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God \*.” (Isaiah lii. 10.)

It is recorded of the pious *David Saunders*, the well-known *Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*, that, when a new clergyman was expected in the parish, seeing a stranger riding into the village, (as he told him, in a conversation he had with him afterwards,) he could not help repeating to himself those words of St. Paul, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” It is said of this extraordinary man, that he “had acquired a surprising knowledge of the Scriptures, readiness in prayer, and spiritual conversation. He used to keep his Bible in the thatch of his hut on Salisbury Plain; by reading which, and prayer, he seemed to keep up a constant communion with God †.”

But we must pass on to the second prophecy, or

\* See Orton, Vol. V. p. 344.

† See Letters from the Rev. Mr. Job Orton, and the Rev. Sir James Stonehouse, Bart. M.D. to the Rev. Thomas Stedman, M.A. Vicar of St. Chad’s, Shrewsbury. In two vols. 1800. Vol. I. L. 3. p. 21, note.



discourse, which I mentioned as beginning at the 13th verse of the LIId chapter, and going on to the end of the LIIId chapter. [On this part Bishop Lowth makes these interesting and important remarks :

“ The subject of Isaiah’s prophecy, from the fortieth chapter inclusive, has hitherto been, in general, the deliverance of the people of God. This includes in it three distinct parts ; which, however, have a close connection with one another : that is, the deliverance of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon ; the deliverance of the Gentiles from their miserable state of ignorance and idolatry, and the deliverance of mankind from the captivity of sin and death. These three subjects are subordinate to one another ; and the two latter are shadowed out under the image of the former. They are covered by it, as by a veil ; which, however, is transparent, and suffers them to appear through it. Cyrus is expressly named as the immediate agent of God in effecting the first deliverance. A greater person is spoken of as the agent, who is to effect the two latter deliverances ; called the Servant, the Elect, of God, in whom his soul delighteth ; Israel, in whom God will be glorified. Now these three subjects have a very near relation to one another ; for, as the agent, who was to effect the two latter deliverances, that is, the Messiah, was to be born a Jew, with particular limitations of time, family, and other circumstances ; the first deliverance was necessary, in the order of Providence, and according to the determinate counsel of God, to the accomplishment of the two latter deliverances ; and the second deliverance was necessary to the third, or rather, was involved in it, and



made an essential part of it: this being the case, Isaiah has not treated the three subjects, as quite distinct and separate, in a methodical and orderly manner, like a philosopher, or a logician, but has taken them in their connective view; he has handled them as a prophet and a poet; he hath allegorized the former, and, under the image of it, has shadowed out the two latter; he has thrown them all together, has mixed one with another, has passed from this to that with rapid transitions, and has painted the whole with the strongest and boldest imagery. The restoration of the Jews from captivity, the call of the Gentiles, the redemption by Messiah, have, hitherto, been handled interchangeably and alternately: Babylon has, hitherto, been kept pretty much in sight; at the same time, that strong intimations of something much greater have frequently been thrown in. But, here, Babylon is at once dropped; and, I think, hardly ever comes in sight again: unless, perhaps, in chapter lv. 12., and lvii. 14. The prophet's views are almost wholly engrossed by the superior part of the subject. He introduces the Messiah as appearing, at first, in the lowest state of humiliation, which he had just touched upon before, (chapter l. 5, 6.) and obviates the offence, which would be occasioned by it, by declaring the important and necessary cause of it, and foreshowing the glory which should follow it.

“This seems to me,” continues Bishop Lowth, “to be the nature and the true design of this part of Isaiah's prophecies; and this view of them seems to afford the best method of resolving difficulties, in which expositors are frequently engaged, being much divided between what is called the literal, and



the mystical sense, not very properly ; for the mystical, or spiritual, sense is, very often, the most literal sense of all \*."

But we must proceed with the prophecy in question :] it is a remarkable prophecy of Christ, the most illustrious in all the Old Testament ; and describes his sufferings as exactly as if it was *a history* of them ; and, therefore, the LIII<sup>d</sup> chapter, besides being appointed, in the course of going through the book, as the first lesson at this evening's service, is appointed as the first lesson at evening service on Good Friday, likewise. The prophecy begins, lii. 13., " Behold, my servant shall deal prudently," he shall conduct himself in his office with integrity and wisdom, " he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high ;" men and angels shall admire him, and God shall exalt him. " As many were astonished at thee ;" or, as some of the versions render it, " at him ;" (" His visage was so marred, more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men ;" they were astonished to see such an alteration made in his countenance, by his sorrows and sufferings, and such a change in his circumstances between the multitude following him in triumph, and his being crucified.) " So shall he sprinkle many nations," by his blood, his word, and spirit, and the ordinance of baptism ; " the kings shall shut their mouths at him ;" shall attend to his doctrine in a humble, reverent manner : " for that which had not been told them shall they see ; and that which they had not heard shall they consider ;" that is, his heavenly doctrine, such as human reason could not



discover. This is applied, Romans xv. 21., to the Gospel.

It goes on, then, at the LIII<sup>d</sup> chapter, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” The prophet, speaking in the name of Christ and his apostles, laments that so few among the Jews believed the report of the Gospel, or were influenced by those miracles which were wrought by the arm, or power, of God; and suggests one reason, namely, Christ’s mean appearance. “For he shall grow up before him,” under the eye and care of God, and in the sight of all the people, “as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground,” that is, as a shoot from the root of a tree cut down to the ground, which, at first, is small and tender, but, afterwards, shoots with great vigour and luxuriance, and quickly becomes a flourishing tree, overspreading the earth. Thus was the tree of David’s family cut down to the root, to Joseph and Mary, the carpenter and his espoused wife, of the little city of Nazareth, which was held in so much contempt, that it was not thought possible that any thing good, or honourable, could arise out of it. (John i. 46.) And, as to Christ himself, when grown up, “he hath no form, nor comeliness; and, when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him;” he hath no extraordinary comeliness, no outward pomp, nothing to suit the carnal expectations of the Jews; and, therefore, “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

Then follows the important point of all, “Surely



he hath borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* sorrows : yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted ;” we thought him justly punished as a blasphemer. “ But he was wounded for *our* transgressions ; he was bruised for *our* iniquities : the chastisement of *our* peace was upon him ; and with *his* stripes *we* are healed ;” our peace was made with God, and we were healed of our spiritual disorders, by his sufferings, whereby he made an atonement for sin, and obtained the Holy Spirit for us. “ All we, like sheep, have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on *him* the iniquity of *us all*. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth : he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” to express any revenge, or impatience, to complain of heaven, or revile his persecutors.

The prophet, then, sets forth his unjust trial and condemnation, his death and burial, and, after enlarging upon his sufferings and his sacrifice, he concludes with, “ he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors ;” he bare the sins of all who lay hold on him as a Redeemer ; and, not only prayed for those who put him to death, at the time ; but he, also, ever liveth, at the right hand of God, to “ make intercession for transgressors.”

So full and remarkable is this prophecy, that, when persons of candid dispositions, open to conviction, have come to compare it with the life and sufferings of our Lord, they have seen the wonderful resemblance, and become converts to Christ. Such was the case of the Ethiopian nobleman, mentioned Acts viii. who, being a worshipper of Jehovah, and a



studier of the prophecies of his servants, when St. Philip showed him how this foretold the life and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and how his life and sufferings answered to it, he instantly became a believer, and was baptized: and it has since been the means of converting many Jews and learned rabbies.

But one of the most remarkable instances on record is *that* of that extraordinary sinner, and as extraordinary penitent, the Earl of Rochester, in the reign of King Charles the Second, who, having lived an infidel and a profligate, till near his death, yet, when Mr. Parsons, who preached his funeral sermon, read to him the LIIId chapter of Isaiah, “God so wrought upon his heart, by the power and efficacy of the Word, assisted by his Holy Spirit, that he declared, that ‘the mysteries of the Passion appeared as clear and plain to him, as ever any thing did that was represented in a glass:’ so that the joy and admiration which possessed his soul upon reading God’s Word to him, was remarkable to all about him; and he had so much delight in his testimonies, that, in my absence,” says Mr. Parsons, “he begged his mother and lady to read the same frequently, and was unsatisfied (notwithstanding his great pains and weakness) till he had learned the LIIId chapter of Isaiah without book.”

My brethren, “all *we*” in this congregation, one and all, “like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;” and, if God should execute upon us what we deserve, we are subject to everlasting damnation. But Christ “hath borne the griefs and carried the sorrows” of each one of *us* who truly believes in him. “He was wounded



for *our* transgressions, he was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of *our* peace was upon him, and with *his* stripes *we* are healed." Let us, therefore, pray unto God to give us a saving "knowledge" of him, that he may "bear our iniquities," and that *we* may be among those who are "justified."



## SERMON LIX.

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THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY—ISAIAH LIV—LVI. 1—8.

THE CONVERSION OF JEWS AND GENTILES—MARRIAGE—THE  
TEMPEST-TOSSED—DIVINE TEACHING—ALL THINGS UNDER  
THE COMMAND OF GOD—INVITATION TO THE THIRSTY—THE  
SURE MERCIES OF DAVID—GOD NOT ALWAYS TO BE FOUND—  
THE SABBATH—THE NAME GIVEN BY GOD—THE HOUSE OF  
PRAYER.

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### ISAIAH lv. 6, 7.

*Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near : Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

WE considered, on Sunday last, to the end of the LIII<sup>d</sup> chapter of the book of Isaiah, and the first lessons for this day are the LV<sup>th</sup> and the LVI<sup>th</sup> ; so that we have now to consider these two, and the previous one, the LIV<sup>th</sup>. The LIV<sup>th</sup> is a prophecy, or discourse, by itself ; and the LV<sup>th</sup> and LVI<sup>th</sup> contain another, which ends at the 8<sup>th</sup> verse of the LVI<sup>th</sup> chapter ; for, at the 9<sup>th</sup> verse, another prophecy begins, and goes on to the end of the 14<sup>th</sup>, or 15<sup>th</sup>, verse of the LIX<sup>th</sup> chapter.

In the LIV<sup>th</sup> chapter, the prophet foretells the increase of the church, by the conversion of Jews



and Gentiles, and its triumphant and glorious state in general. He begins, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord." St. Paul, Gal. iv. 27, applies this to the calling in of the Gentiles; that they should be more numerous than ever the Jews were, though, before, they had not stood in a covenant-relation to God. The prophet goes on, "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes," this is an allusion to God's people as formerly dwelling in *tents*, which they are called upon to enlarge and strengthen for their numerous children; "For thou," my church, "shalt break forth on the right hand, and on the left," far beyond thy present bounds: "and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited;" those who know not God, and are, therefore, desolate, shall become wise and holy. "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth," thy small beginnings, when in a persecuted state, "and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more:" when thou hadst no covenant-relation with God. "For thy maker is thine husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name," he will manifest his affection to thee, though he might seem to have cast thee off; "and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called;" that is, the God of the whole Gentile church, as well as of the Jews.



God is, here, pleased to call himself by the most strong and lasting, the most tender and affectionate, the most honourable and the most pure, of the social ties, that of *husband* to his *Church*; and what husband and wife *ought to be* to each other, that *is* God to the Church, and that *ought* the Church to be to God. We are apt to form our opinion of this union by what we *see* of it in a fallen world; where, through our corrupt natures, for the most part, it is strife; and, where appearances are less unfavourable, it is more from a mutual indifference, or forbearance, than from a mutual and holy love. In the union of two regenerated hearts, or souls, will be found the purest instances of this union upon earth; but, to conceive of it in its highest state, we must endeavour to imagine what it *would have been*, had man continued in a state of innocence in paradise, without sin, without sickness or sorrow of any kind, without frail and rebellious natures, no jarrings or jealousies, no taunts or upbraidings, no undue desires or covetings, their children only joys and blessings, those around them only helps and lovers \*.

This is only a *faint* picture of what the married state would be, did not man bear about him a corrupt nature; but all *this*, and *more, infinitely more*, would God be to his Church: but she has a fallen nature, consisting of fallen creatures, and hath broken her marriage vow, and God was obliged, in his anger, and for the sake of his honour, to put her away. “For,” the prophet goes on, at the 6th verse, “the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God;” as a wife put away

\* Psalm lxxxviii. 18., “My *lovers* and my friends.”



from her husband for unfaithfulness, who, remembering the tenderness of her youthful days, and seeing marks of repentance, receives her again. "For a small moment, have I forsaken thee; but, with great mercies, will I gather thee. In a little wrath, I hid my face from thee, for a moment; but, with everlasting kindness, will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." This is applicable to the Jews amid their *present* dispersion, and seems to refer to their *future conversion*. "For this is," he continues, "as the waters of Noah unto me: for, as I have sworn, that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so, have I sworn, that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee;" that is, I will not be so for ever, my covenant with Israel is equally firm and sure, as with Noah, and I will bring them, at length, into a state of favour, from which they shall never be excluded. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee;" and the covenant of God shall be as firm with all Christians, as with the Jews. It may be farther remarked, upon the 5th verse, and the *husband* there spoken of, that, when some of the Jews spoke to John the Baptist concerning *Christ*, John iii. 29., he said, "he that hath the *bride* is the *bridegroom*:" meaning, that Christ, whom he had baptized, and of whom he "bare witness," was the true *bridegroom* of the Church; and, as the Church has but one husband, it is plain, that CHRIST is the "Maker," "the Lord of Hosts," the "Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth," here spoken of.



He then takes up a fresh image, or similitude, and says, verse 11., “O, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires,” (a precious stone of a blue colour); “and I will make thy windows of agates,” that is, the *frames* of thy windows, (of stones beautifully veined) “and thy gates of carbuncles,” (of stones of a glowing red,) “and all thy borders,” or walls, “of pleasant stones,” of beautiful precious stones. These verses represent the Church as a company of *mariners* tossed on the ocean, and, afterwards, conducted to a haven of rest and joy, as much superior to any present scene, as the city here described would be to any thing the eye of man ever saw. This is applicable to the prosperity of the Gospel-church, which is “built on the foundation of the prophets and the apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.” (Eph. ii. 20. Isaiah xxviii. 16. 1 Pet. ii. 6.)

The prophet adds, “And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children:” this is an explanation of the figurative expressions used before, and which shews that the beauty of the Church consists in *knowledge, holiness and love*. Our Lord, John vi. 45., applies this part of the prophecy to the influences of divine grace, “It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God.” It is one of the greatest of blessings to live in a country, or a place, where the knowledge of God is taught. The children of truly Christian parents and teachers exceed in knowledge the wisest heathen philosophers. But, besides this, we have *a divine teaching*, by means of the Holy Spirit operating upon the mind, by which it is



enlightened and opened, guided in the difficulties of life, and directed in the way of duty and happiness. No labours of ministers, no pains of our own, in reading and hearing, will do without this. Let none despise it; let all value it, and seek it earnestly, by prayer, for themselves and their children, as they desire to obtain great and lasting peace.

It proceeds, "In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee:" thou shalt be delivered from thine enemies, from being overwhelmed with trouble, and even from death. "Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me:" they shall have no commission from me, as the Church's enemies sometimes have: "Whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake," out of the love I have for thee, that is, shall come over to thy side. "Behold I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy;" the metal, the smith, and the instruments made by them, the hands that wield, are all my creatures; I have an absolute command over them, and they can do no more than I permit. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn;" whether any attempt thy destruction by forcible assaults, or injurious calumnies, I will plead thy cause, and undertake to justify thee. "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

The prophecy, beginning with the LVth chapter, (the first lesson at this morning's service) and going on to the 8th verse of the LVIth chapter, contains



the substance of *the covenant of grace*, and gives merciful encouragement to sinners to return to God : it describes the fulness, freeness, excellence, and everlasting nature of the blessings of the Gospel, and the conditions upon which they are to be obtained, without respect to persons, or nations : it begins with a proclamation to this purpose : “ Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy, and eat ; yea come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price ; ” water, wine, and milk, are, here, emblems of *spiritual* blessings ; these are offered to those who *thirst*, that is, to those who earnestly desire them, without money or price : a feeling of their own poverty and unworthiness, is all that God demands, though the blessings are infinitely above all price.

In reading, lately, an account of “ A Voyage round the World,” and of the hardships endured by the crew, from a long continuance at sea, amid storms and tempests, a want of provisions and of water, and amid sickness and over-fatigue, I was much struck with the following account of their arrival at a beautiful island : “ Being, now, nearer in with the shore,” says the writer of this interesting narrative, “ we could discover, that the broken craggy precipices, which had appeared so unpromising, at a distance, were far from barren, being, in most places, covered with woods ; and that, between them, there were, every where interspersed, the finest vallies clothed with a most beautiful verdure, and watered with numerous streams and cascades, no valley, of any extent, being unprovided of its proper rill. The *water*, too, as we afterwards found, was not inferior to any we had tasted, and was constantly clear. The aspect of this country, thus diversified, would, at all



times, have been extremely delightful; but in our distressed situation, languishing, as we were, for the land and its vegetable productions, (an inclination constantly attending every stage of the sea-scurvy) it is scarcely credible with what eagerness and transport we viewed the shore, and with how much impatience we longed for the greens, and other refreshments, which were then in sight, and, particularly, the *water*, for of this we had been confined to a very sparing allowance, a considerable time, and had, then, but five ton remaining on board. Those only who have endured a long series of *thirst*, and who can readily recall the desire and agitation, which the ideas alone of *springs* and *brooks* have, at that time, raised in them, can judge of the emotion with which we eyed *a large cascade of the most transparent water*, which poured itself from a rock near an hundred feet high into the sea, at a small distance from the ship. Even those amongst the *diseased*, who were not in the very last stages of the distemper, though they had been long confined to their hammocks, exerted the small remains of strength that were left them, and crawled up to the deck to *feast themselves* with this *reviving prospect* \*."

*Such* is the *thirst* which every converted sinner has, at some time, felt after the *waters of life*; and *such* is the *thirst* which *you who have never yet felt it*, I hope, may one day feel. St. John tells us, in his Gospel, vii. 37, 38, that Jesus, being in the temple, "in the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow

\* Lord Anson's Voyage, B. II. Ch. I, 12mo. p. 117.



rivers of living water.” The *feast*, here alluded to, was the Feast of Tabernacles, which was celebrated on the 15th day of the month *Tisri*, which was the *seventh* month of the *sacred* and first of the civil year, answering to the last half of our *September* and first half of *October*, so that this feast was held about the time of our new *Michaelmas*, when the in-gathering of the fruits was finished. It was celebrated with very great rejoicings. But the ceremony at which the Jews testified most joy, was that of *drawing* and *pouring out of water*, which was done on the eighth, or last, day of the Feast. The Jewish writers say, that “He that never saw the rejoicing of drawing water, knows not what rejoicing is.” At this time a priest went into the *fountain*, or *pool*, of Siloam, and drew some water in a golden vessel, and brought it into the temple: and, at the time of the daily sacrifice, while the members of the sacrifice were on the altar, he went, and poured this water, mingled with wine, upon it, the people, during this offering, singing, with transports of joy, the xiith chapter of Isaiah, especially the 3d verse, “With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” This ceremony was observed in remembrance of their forefathers being miraculously relieved from perishing, through *thirst*, in the wilderness, when *water* issued from the rock; for this water issued from the bottom of the rock on which the temple stood, and it tended to remind them to be thankful to God, who had brought them into a land of *brooks* and of *fountains*, (Deut. viii. 7, 8.) This custom, also, of pouring water on the altar, was a kind of drink-offering to God, to pray for *rain* for the ensuing seed-time. It, moreover, very expressly pointed out the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit: and the Jews themselves



allow that this pouring out of the *water* was an emblem of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. A learned rabbi says, “Why is the name of it called *the drawing of water*? Because of the drawing, or pouring out of the Holy Ghost, according to what is said, ‘with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation\*.’”

It is not improbable, then, that Isaiah delivered this prophecy respecting the Messiah, in the temple, at the Feast of Tabernacles; and that Jesus, at the Feast of Tabernacles, also, took occasion, from the ceremony, and the citing of the prophecy, to declare himself to be the Messiah so promised. The pious Wogan, in his exposition of this chapter †, after saying, “that these living *waters* are,” Christ’s “Spirit, that this *wine* is his blood, this *milk* his sacred word;” exclaims, “O my God! I ask not then for these *waters* to refresh me, this *wine* to comfort, this *milk* to feed my soul: they are ready to my hand; they are offered to my lips: but this I ask, *an appetite* for them, an hunger and thirst, to constrain me to accept them; to take and eat, in remembrance of him, who died to obtain these mercies for me; and to feed on him in my heart with thanksgiving.”

But we must proceed with the prophecy: at the 2d verse, the prophet says, “Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” Such is the usual way with the world, they are constantly laying out their money in the expectation of finding gratification, and are, as constantly, disappointed, yet, still, they go on; they take more pains about the vanities of the world than it would cost them to ob-

\* Jones’s Script. Antiq. p. 45—48.

† Vol. I. p. 368.



tain peace here and heaven hereafter. “Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness; ye shall obtain what will satisfy and delight you, the true knowledge of God and eternal happiness. “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live,” spiritually and happily, “and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David;” that is, the mercies that were promised to David, which he set such a value upon, and which are given in *Christ*, the son of David: procured by his death, and made sure by his covenant to all that believe. “Behold I have given him for a witness” of God’s mercy and faithfulness “to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee,” that is, the Gentile nations, “shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for he hath glorified thee;” as he did, not only by the miracles which he wrought, and by raising him up from the dead; but, also, when the voice from heaven, (John xii. 28.,) said, that he had glorified him, and would glorify him again.

The prophet, then, says, in the words I have chosen for my text, “Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call ye upon him, while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” From this we learn that there is a time, when God will *not* be found, and will be afar off. While, therefore, he *is* near, seek him, and call upon him. Forsake, not only your wicked ways, but, also, your unrighteous



*thoughts*; and, for your encouragement in this, you may be assured, that God will have mercy upon you; and, not only pardon you, for Christ's sake, but will do it freely, fully, and abundantly.

In the remainder of the chapter, God declares his power and wisdom, and the efficacy of his word, and the happy consequences which shall result from it.

The LVIth chapter (the first lesson at this evening service,) begins with an exhortation to the people of God to prepare for the great deliverance prophesied of in the foregoing chapter: "Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed;" observe all my laws and commandments, for that dispensation is near to be introduced, which contains the brightest display of my justice, faithfulness and goodness. "Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold of it," that acts with steadiness and resolution in religion; "that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil;" that does nothing unlawful on the sabbath day, nor neglects any of the proper duties of it.

We see, here, the importance of a serious and strict regard to the *sabbath*. Observe what stress is laid upon keeping it. It is indispensably required of all proselytes to the Jewish religion; and of all who are joined to the Christian church; otherwise they can expect no comfort in God's service, nor will their prayers and praises be accepted. Let *us*, then, never waste any part of that holy time, nor neglect any part of the holy work of the day. But we must "lay hold on this." It requires great resolution to do it, considering the bad examples we have about us, and how many, even of those who profess



religion act otherwise. This is the way to have the blessing of God upon our religious exercises, and upon our daily business and comforts.

At the 3d verse, the prophet affectionately cautions “the son of the stranger that hath joined himself unto the Lord,” that is any strangers that might chuse to go with the Jews from Babylon, and become proselytes to the worship of the true God, not to say “The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people.” And, as the barbarous custom of the court of Babylon (xxxix. 7.) had prevented many from having offspring, and from being priests and magistrates, (Deut. xxiii. 1.) and so had less inducement to return to their own country and inheritance, “unto them” he says, “will I give, in mine house and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off;” I will give them spiritual blessings, great honour and comfort there, and a name that shall not be cut off, as that of the most numerous families may be. “Also the sons of the stranger,” the heathen, “that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants,” to become proselytes, “every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant, even them will I bring unto my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called *an house of prayer for all people* ;” that is, their spiritual sacrifices shall be accepted, and they shall enjoy great delight in their approaches to God. The place of worship being called *a house of prayer*, and not of sacrifice, and being said to be for *all people*, inti-



mates, that this refers to the admittance of Gentiles into the Gospel Church, on the same terms as the believing Jews.

When our Lord, in his zeal for the temple of God, drove out the buyers and sellers of sacrifices, and the money changers, who were making it a den of extortioners and thieves, he quoted this prophecy, saying, "My house shall be called the house of *prayer* for all nations." (Matt. xxi. 13. Mark xi. 17. Luke xix. 46.)

The prophet concludes this prophecy, at verse 8., with saying, The Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, "Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him;" the Gentiles as well as Jews, that is many more Gentiles shall join them after the captivity, as well as finally restore the whole race of Israel and the fulness of the Gentiles.

*We*, my brethren, are of the gathered of the Gentiles, and *we* are to keep God's sabbath from polluting it, by resorting to *his house, the Church*, which is his "house of prayer." It is not, then, to be made a place of *gossip*, to come and shew your own fine clothes, and to see how others are dressed; nor is it a place for the young to meet their *sweethearts*; nor yet a place to come to, or stay away from, according as you find yourselves in good or ill humour with the minister who officiates; nor yet a place to come to for mere *form*, because others do so; but it is the *house of prayer* of the Great Jehovah, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are to be worshipped "in spirit and in truth;" (John iv. 23.) not by inattention, and thinking of other things, not by a mere form of words, with the lips only, and sitting upon your seats; but, as fallen sinners, upon your knees



before your Maker, whom you have offended, and as seeking reconciliation with him through his Son, the Mediator and Redeemer, and hoping for health and light and strength through the influences of the Holy Spirit. To which Three Persons in One Godhead be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and glory and praise, now and for evermore.



## SERMON LX.

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FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY. ISAIAH LVI. 9—12.—LIX.  
1—15.

THE FLOCK GIVEN AS A PREY—FAITHLESS WATCHMEN—IDOLATRY—UNHOLY ALLIANCES—THE HUMBLE SPIRIT—THE WICKED LIKE THE TROUBLED SEA—THE FAST ACCEPTABLE TO GOD—BANDS OF WICKEDNESS—SPEAKING VANITY—CONDITIONS OF HAVING THE LORD WITH US—THE FAST ACCEPTABLE TO GOD—OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH—CONFESSION OF SINS.

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### ISAIAH LVII. 15.

*Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him, also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

THE first lessons for this day, the fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, are the LVIIth and the LVIIIth chapters of Isaiah; but these form only a part of a prophecy, or discourse, which begins at the 9th verse of the LVIth chapter, and goes on to the end of the 15th verse of the LIXth. This, therefore, is the portion which I purpose to consider this day. It is the 11th discourse of what I have called the VIth part of Isaiah's prophecies, namely those which were, probably, delivered towards the close of Hezekiah's reign. It contains a prophecy of the calamities that would befall the inhabitants of Judah in



consequence of the sins which they would commit after the death of Hezekiah, particularly their idolatry and hypocrisy; by the captivity of Manasseh and some others, and, afterwards, of the whole nation, first by the Babylonians, and, afterwards, by the Romans.

The prophecy begins,—lvi. 9.,—“All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest.” The Church is represented as God’s *flock*, and their princes, and magistrates, and priests as *shepherds*, to watch over, feed, and defend it; but, because they neglected this care, the *wild beasts* are called upon to devour it. A like charge is given by Jeremiah, xii. 7., and part of the 9th verse, where God is introduced declaring his purpose of punishing his people, by giving them up as a prey to their enemies the Chaldeans, “I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly-beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.”—“Come ye, assemble; all the beasts of the field, come to devour.”

Isaiah goes on, at the 10th verse, to describe their neglect, covetousness and luxury, “His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark,” to awaken the shepherds, or drive away the wolves; they neither reprove, nor forewarn sinners; “sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand,” that take no pains to understand: “they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter,” from his employment, department, or place of abode. “Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day,



and much more abundant ;” they, not only run into excesses themselves, but tempt others to do so, vainly confident of the continuance of their prosperity, and deriding the threatenings of the prophets.

In respect to what is here said about the *watchmen*, it is to be observed, that the watches in the East, even to this day, are performed by a loud cry of the watchmen, from time to time, to mark the hour, and that very frequently, in order to shew that they themselves are constantly attentive to their duty. Hence, the watchmen are said by the prophet, lii. 8., to “lift up their voice ;” and, here, they are reproached as being “dumb dogs that cannot bark, dreamers, sluggards, loving to slumber.” The watchmen in the camp of the caravans, go their rounds, crying one after another, “God is one, He is merciful :” and often add, “Take heed to yourselves \*.”

How miserable is the state of a people whose *shepherds* deserve the character which is here given of those of Israel. When princes, magistrates, and ministers are ignorant, idle, greedy, cowardly, and sottish, they, not only do not answer the ends of their office, but are a reproach to it, corrupt others by their ill examples, and encourage wickedness, by suffering it to go unpunished and unreprieved. Let us earnestly pray, that God would preserve our country and churches from such men ; and that he would engage all magistrates to be “a terror to evil doers,” and all ministers to “watch for souls, as they that must give an account †.”

In the LVIIth chapter, the prophet begins with observing how unmoved they were, and would be,

\* Tavernier, quoted by Lowth, p. 263.

† Orton, Vol. V. p. 359.



under the loss of good men, alluding, perhaps, to the deaths of Hezekiah and Josiah: "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come," and that it is a token that judgments are coming upon the land. "He shall enter into peace," or go in peace: "they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness;" or, rather, "they shall rest in their beds who have walked in uprightness."

The prophet, then, goes on to reprove the Jews for their sins, especially their idolatry; several abominable and foolish instances of which he mentions, as even "slaying the children in the valleys, under the cliffs," or in the caverns "of the rocks;" and worshipping "the smooth stones of the stream." This was, probably, in allusion to the stone which Jacob set up in Bethel, (Gen. xxviii. 18.,) pouring oil upon the top of it, *in remembrance*, or *as a monument*, of the vision of angels, when on his way to Padan-aram: and, so far, in him, it was right: but, when others set up a stone, and poured oil upon it and worshipped it, it was idolatry. So, also, when Moses set up the brazen serpent, according to God's command, and the people *looked on it*, and were healed, it was right; nor was it wrong their keeping it in *remembrance* of that event; but, when they burnt incense to it, and worshipped it, it was idolatry, because it was *Nehushtan*, only a piece of *brass*. So, again, if we had *the cross* upon which our blessed Saviour was crucified, there would be no harm in keeping it, *in remembrance* of his precious death upon it, for our sins, to bring us to God; nor would there be any harm in making one like it, and keeping it *as a remembrance*; or in having a *picture* of



our Lord upon the cross ; but, were any one to bow down before them, and *worship* them, as *the Papists* do, *that* is idolatry and sin : so necessary is it to *distinguish* in every instance, to know what is the will of God, and draw the precise line between what is lawful and what is unlawful.

At the 8th verse, the prophet says, “ Behind the doors, also, and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance ;” that is, the image of their domestic gods, or something dedicated to them ; in direct opposition to the law of God, which commanded them, Deut. vi. 9, and xi. 20, to write upon the doorposts of their houses, and upon their gates, the words of God’s law. If they chose for them such a situation, as being more private, it was in defiance of a particular curse, denounced in the Law, Deut. xxvii. 15, against the man, who should make a graven, or a molten, image, and put it in a secret place\*.

At the 9th verse, he says, “ And thou wentest to the king” of Assyria, or Egypt, “ with ointment,” or, rather, with *oil*, as a present, and “ perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell ;” that is, in the most mean and abject manner, courting alliance with idols, the inhabitants of hell.

At verse 10, he says, “ Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way : yet saidst thou not, There is no hope ;” or, rather, as Bishop Lowth proposes to read it †, “ Thou hast said, There is no hope.” That is, they pretend that there is no hope for them, if they repent ; and, so, they make a desperate resolution to continue, at all hazard, in their idolatrous practices. The same sentiment is expressed by the

\* Lowth, p. 249.

† Page 250.



idolatrous Israelites, from II. 25, and XVIII. 12. But, if we take the words as they are here, if they are read as a question, “Saidst thou not, There is no hope?” the sense will be the same.

At the 12th verse, “I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works;” this is *ironical*, and means, I will make it evidently appear, by my righteous judgments upon thee, that thy works are very different from thy own conceit of them; “for they shall not profit thee,” but prove thy ruin. For he says, “When thou criest” in distress, “let thy companies,” thy idols, or allies, “deliver thee: but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them.”

He, then, states what will be the different lot of the righteous: “but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain;” he shall continue in the land, or return from the captivity. He, then, introduces, as in former instances, the *harbinger* and the *pioneers* crying out, “Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way; take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people;” all hindrances shall be removed, and a way be made for their safe and honourable return. “For,” he then proceeds, in the words of my text, “thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him, also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones;” to afford them support and comfort in all their difficulties and afflictions. And will, then, “the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy,” will he condescend to dwell with *man*? with *fallen man*? Yes, but not with “the high and lofty” of the earth, but with “him that is of a contrite and humble spi-



rit." Our blessed Lord, when upon earth, said, John xiv. 23, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Thus, then, we see, that there is no one so poor and lowly, but God and his blessed Son would be pleased to come and dwell with him. But, why, then, do we *not* see, that God and his Son are the dwellers in every house and in every cottage? Plainly, because we are *not* "of a humble and contrite spirit," and we do *not* love God and Christ, and keep their words. This is the reason, then, that we are not happy. There is often as much *pride* with the *poor*, as with the *rich*. Pray, then, to God to give you a "broken and a contrite heart," and God and Christ will come and "dwell in your hearts by faith," (Eph. iii. 17.,) and your houses will be the abode of peace and happiness.

"But," he goes on, at the 20th verse, "the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;" their guilty conscience shall be a constant source of uneasiness, like the troubled sea, which can never rest, and which, though it may sometimes appear clear on the surface, hath a thick sediment at the bottom, which is worked up when storms and tempests arise, and is all filth and confusion. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." This the prophet had said before, xlviii. 22.; but it cannot be repeated too often; whatever outward prosperity they enjoy, and though they may partake ever so largely of the temporal blessings of my people, there is not, there cannot be, any real and lasting peace in their minds.

The LVIIIth chapter, (the first lesson at this evening service, the fourth Sunday after the Epi-



phany,) a chapter of particular elegance, contains a severe reproof of the Jews, on account of their vices, and, particularly, of their hypocrisy in their fasts and ceremonial observances. It clearly points out their duty, and gives large promises of happiness and prosperity. It begins with a charge to the prophet, and, in him, to all ministers, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins,” especially in their religious worship.

“Yet ye seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God : they ask of me the ordinances of justice ; they take delight in approaching to God ;” that is, in coming to my temple and presenting their sacrifices. “Wherefore have we fasted,” and performed all other parts of outward worship, “say they, and thou seest not ? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge ?” God then answers, “Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labour ;” you find wherewith to please yourselves, and yet are rigorous in burdening others. “Behold ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness,” that is, with a wicked, or cruel, fist, handling the poor with severity ; “ye shall *not* fast as ye do this day,” if ye would have God hear your prayers, and answer them from heaven, “to make your voice to be heard on high,” either in clamorous devotions, or in quarrels one with another. “Is it such a fast that I have chosen ?” that I will approve and accept of ? “a day for a man to afflict his soul,” to mortify himself by outward abstinence, “is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sack-cloth and ashes under him ? wilt thou call this a fast, and an



acceptable day to the Lord?" canst thou believe it will be so?

God, then, proceeds to say, "Is not *this* the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

These are brief hints of the severities which the greater Jews exercised over the less. They extorted from them unreasonable usury for the loan of money, which the debtors not being able to pay, they were obliged to make over all they were worth to their creditors, by *mortgages* and acknowledgments *in writing*. Such *writings* were, probably, those *instruments*, which are, here, called "the bands of wickedness." For the poor debtors were entangled in them by the wicked extortion of the monied men, who, by furnishing them with a little bread, wormed them out of their estates, and reduced their families under a yoke of servitude\*. It is to be feared, that *such* "bands of wickedness" are not uncommon in these times, in this *Christian* country. How often is advantage taken of the present wants of the poor, to induce them to part with their property, far, very far, below its real value!

God goes on, then, to speak farther of the nature of "the fast which he has chosen,"—"Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry," to send food to the poor, "and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh," thy own kindred and countrymen?

He, then, states the blessed consequence of doing this, "Then shall thy light," thy inward satisfaction,

\* See Reading's Sermons, Vol. I. p. 125.



happiness and delight in God's ways, "break forth as the morning," dart itself out as the sun through the clouds, "and thy health shall spring forth speedily;" all thy wounds shall be quickly healed: "and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward;" or thy guard behind from thine enemies pressing upon thee. "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am."

God, then, dwells upon what he had before stated, "If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke," all instruments of oppression, "the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;"—By this, I apprehend, is meant, that we are not to provoke, threaten, expose, or scoff at others, either by actions, or by words; there being a *language* of the *hand*, as well as of the tongue. The "putting forth of the finger" is sometimes expressive of defiance and threatening, sometimes of contempt and ridicule; and, in all cases of strife and contention, it serves much to exasperate, and, is, therefore, forbidden, as well as venomous darts and violent scoldings of the tongue.

The "speaking vanity" is one of the most extensive and reigning sins in the world; it makes up the greatest part of the conversation of most men. Slandering and defaming, deceits in dealing, flatteries and false informations, proud boastings, and idle stories, together with that corrupt and filthy communication, and that torrent of oaths and curses which are continually flowing out of the mouths of men, are all comprised in this one expression of "speaking vanity;" and must be put away from the midst of us, as God, here, requires, before our fasts, or, indeed, any other religious exercise, can avail



any thing, either for our own good, or that of the public \*.

God proceeds, verse 10., “ And, if thou draw out thy soul,” thy affections and compassion, so that thy heart go along with thy gift, “ to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones;” fill thee with plenty, when others are in want: “ and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee,” thy remnant, or posterity, “ shall build the old waste places;” the temple and city that the enemies had destroyed: “ thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in;” thou shalt build new towns, enlarge old ones; those parts of the country that are desolate, and the paths overgrown, shall be restored, and fortified places built up and repaired. “ If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath;” that is, “ if thou forbear trampling under foot the sabbath;” and “ from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure,” or making it a day of diversion, “ nor speaking thine own words,” but the whole of thy conversation be suitable to the holiness of the day: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth;” thou shalt see thy country delivered from thy enemies, and thou shalt ride forth

\* See Reading, I. 128.



to see the fortifications once possessed by them; “and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

We see, here, how far hypocrites may go in outward services. They may seek God daily, express some satisfaction and delight in attending his services; they may ask the way of duty, and take a pride in bringing their sacrifices to his temple; yet indulge themselves in sensual pleasures, lay heavy burdens upon others, have strife and deceit among themselves, and “smite with the fist of wickedness.” All their services are nothing but outward shew, and can never be pleasing to that God who searches the heart, and requires truth in the inward parts. It is not ceremonial observances, but *justice* and *charity* that make our services acceptable to God. If we practise these, God “will surround us with his favour, as with a shield;” then shall our prayers be heard: and, when we call, God shall answer, “Here am I, a present help in every time of need.” Reformation and goodness is the way to comfort and happiness.

We see, that *fasts*, both in individuals and nations, are acceptable to God, provided they are the fruits of a humble, contrite, and charitable heart. I have had occasion lately (on the first Sunday after Christmas Day) to recall to your minds in how very remarkable a manner God was pleased to accept and honour our national fasts, in the years 1803 and 1804, by granting to the humiliation and prayers of the nation the life of our late beloved king, and deliverance from the wrathful threatenings of an implacable foe. And, if such beneficial effects arose from such annual national acts of devotion, it seems strange that they should not have been continued, by



our rulers in Church and State, since the war, as a time of peace and prosperity (though our time since the peace cannot have been called altogether a time of *prosperity*) is as trying, and, perhaps, more so, in point of piety and morality, than a state of war. Agur was as fearful of being *full*, and *denying* God, and saying "Who is the Lord?" as he was of being in *adversity*, and acting *distrustfully* and "taking the name of God in vain." (Prov. xxx. 9.)

This consideration should, likewise, call our serious attention to another important part of this chapter. If we "remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy," lay aside our business and pleasure, "call it a *delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable*, and honour *him*, not finding our own pleasures, nor speaking our own words;" then, it is promised, "thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord;" enjoy the highest pleasures in communion with him and a sense of his favour. God will "bring" such "to his holy mountain," "make them joyful in his house of prayer," and "their sacrifices shall be accepted on his altar. Let this engage us to a strict observance of the Sabbath, as one of the best preservers of the power of religion in the soul, and as the most likely means to secure the divine blessing on ourselves, our families, and on the nation. Hypocrites may keep solemn days of fasting; but none but sincere and pious souls will constantly "keep the Sabbath from polluting it\*."

But I must hasten to the conclusion of this prophecy in the LIXth chapter, to the end of the 15th verse. The chapter is remarkable for the beauty, strength, and variety of the images with which it abounds. The Israelites having questioned

\* See Orton, Vol. V. p. 367.



God's power and goodness, because he had not regarded their fastings and prayers, the prophet proceeds, farther, to shew them the cause of it, by a more general reproof of their wickedness, bloodshed, violence, falsehood and injustice. At the 9th verse they are introduced as themselves making an ample confession of their sins, and lamenting their wretched state in consequence of them.

Let me, then, exhort, *you*, my brethren, to turn your thoughts inward upon *yourselves*, and pray to God to assist you in the search; and, if you there discover any sins, the cause of your own misery, the injury and pest of the place where you reside, and of the nation at large, confess them before God, repent, and forsake them, seek to him in Jesus Christ, and be assured that it will be for your happiness here, and for your eternal happiness in the world to come.



## SERMON LXI.

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FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.—ISAIAH LIX. 16—LXIV.

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH—THE TRIUMPHS OF GOD'S GRACE—THE REDEEMER—THE CHURCH IN THE LATTER DAY—ENLARGING GOD'S CHURCH SHOULD BE A NATIONAL WORK—DELIVERANCE PREACHED TO THE CAPTIVES—THE WARRIOR FROM EDOM—A PRAYER OF THE JEWS—THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN.

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### ISAIAH lxiv. 4—6.

*Since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways: behold thou art wroth: for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved. But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*

[WHEN I began considering the book of the prophet Isaiah, I stated that it might be conveniently divided into *six* parts, or sections, each containing a number of discourses, or prophecies, delivered by the prophet to the various nations, or people, whom he was commissioned to address. That the *first* part is contained in the 1st, to the end of the Vth chapter, and gives a general description of the state and condition of the Jews, in the several periods of their history; the publication and reception of the Gospel, and the coming of Messiah to judgment; and that these pro-



phesies were delivered in the reign of Uzziah king of Judah. The *second* part consists of the prophecies delivered in the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz, and is contained in the VIth, to the end of the XIIth chapter. The *third* part, contained in the XIIIth chapter, to the end of the XXIIId, consists of various predictions against the Babylonians, Assyrians, Philistines, and other nations with which the Jews had intercourse. Of these the XIIIth and XIVth chapters were, probably, delivered in the reign of Ahaz, and the rest of the book in that of Hezekiah. The *fourth* part, the XXIVth, to the end of the XXXVth chapter, contains a prophecy of the great calamities that should befall the people of God, his merciful preservation of a remnant of them, and of their restoration to their country, of their conversion to the Gospel, and the destruction of Anti-Christ. The *fifth* part, the XXXVIth, to the end of the XXXIXth chapter, comprises the historical part of the book. And the *sixth* part, the XLth chapter, to the end of the LXVIth, or end of the book, contains a series of prophecies, or discourses, delivered, in all probability, towards the end of Hezekiah's reign.

These prophecies, I before stated, are *twelve* in number, the *first* contained in the XLth and XLIst chapters,—the *second* contained in the XLId and XLIIId chapters,—the *third* in the XLIVth and XLVth,—the *fourth* in the XLVIth and XLVIIth,—the *fifth* in the XLVIIIth chapter,—the *sixth* the XLIXth chapter,—the *seventh* the Lth, the LIst and to the end of the 12th verse of the LIId chapter,—the *eighth* begins at the 13th verse of the LIId chapter, and goes on to the end of the LIIId chapter,—the *ninth* is contained in the LIVth chapter,—the *tenth* in the LVth, and to the end of the 8th verse



of the LVIth chapter,—the *eleventh* begins at the 9th verse of the LVIth chapter, and goes on to the end of the 15th verse of the LIXth chapter,—and the *twelfth*, and last, begins at the 16th verse of the LIXth chapter, and goes on for the remainder of that, and the six following chapters, to the conclusion.]

The first lessons for this day, the 5th Sunday after Epiphany, are the LIXth and the LXIVth, and for Sunday next the LXVth and LXVIth,—and, as I, on Sunday last, considered the LIXth, to the end of the 15th verse, that is, to the end of the *eleventh* prophecy, or discourse,—I have, now, to begin the *twelfth*, and last, discourse, and to consider to the end of the LXIVth chapter; and, on Sunday next, shall consider the LXVth and LXVIth, and, so, conclude the book of Isaiah.

We will, however, just look back to the former part of the LIXth chapter. It continues the subject of the preceding one, and, verses 1 and 2, begins with a farther reply to those, who complained, that God did not regard their fasting and prayers. The 3d, to the end of the 8th verse, contains a more general reproof of their wickedness, bloodshedding, violence, falsehood and injustice. At the 9th, to the end of the 15th verse, the pious remnant are introduced as making an ample confession of their sins, and lamenting the public calamities, the decay of religion, and the darkness which rests upon their path.

When it might have been expected, that the Lord would denounce, or inflict, the severest vengeance on those, who had so greatly provoked him; behold, he appears to introduce the most glorious triumphs of his grace. When none in comparison were left



to protest against the wickedness that prevailed, or to intercede with God to interpose and fulfil his promises; then his own arm would effect the salvation which he intended; and his righteous regard to his promises, to the cause of godliness, and the honour of his law, and his just indignation against his enemies, would sustain him: the prophet begins, “And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm,” that is, God’s arm, “brought salvation unto him,” to Israel; “and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head;” he appeared as a warrior, completely armed against the Chaldeans and other enemies of his people; “and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal,” for his people, “as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompense. So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him;” if new enemies should come, like an inundation, which threatens to bear down all before it, God, by some secret powerful means, will overcome them.

But this is only an *earnest* of what God would do for the Jews hereafter; a promise is added of their conversion to Christianity, in the latter day, for the prophet says, verse 20, “And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord.” The exposition given of this part by St. Paul, in the xith chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, the 25th, to the end of



the 28th verse, is *this*, “ For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits,) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And, so, all Israel shall be saved : as it is written, there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob ; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As, concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes : but, as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.”

“ As for me,” continues the prophet, “ this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord ; my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.” Christ shall, finally, establish the Israelites in God’s covenant again, in which they shall continue to the end of the world ; teaching them by his Word and Spirit, and rendering them effectual on multitudes, from one generation to another, even to the end of time : the Jews, when nationally converted, shall never revolt from God any more.

The LXth chapter foretells the glorious state of the Gospel Church, especially in the latter day, when Jews and Gentiles shall be converted. You will recollect, probably, what I said, in a former discourse, (for the 7th Sunday after Trinity,) when speaking of the glory of the Temple of Solomon, with its white polished stones and gilded ornaments, and how it glittered and blazed, as it were, when the sun shone upon it. The prophet, here, addresses the temple, laid in the dust, amid surrounding darkness, to arise to its former, and even still greater, splendour, “ Arise,



shine; for thy light"—“the sun of righteousness”—“is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people;” the Gentiles shall be grossly ignorant, and the Jews blinded by the strongest prejudices: “but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee,” very many of thy converts shall come from beyond the sea, “the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.”

The Church has appointed this chapter as the first lesson, at morning service, on the day of the Epiphany; and it may have been said to have begun to be fulfilled, when the Messiah was born and the glory of the Lord shone from heaven to the shepherds, and the multitude of the heavenly host sang glory to God and peace to man,—when the infant Jesus was presented in the temple, and Zacharias hailed him as “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God’s people Israel,” (Luke ii. 32.)—when the eastern Magi, or kings, led by a star, came to Bethlehem, and brought presents, and worshipped him,—and by every action of his wonderful life,—and, when, on the memorable day of Pentecost, the “tongues like as of fire” sat upon the apostles, and they declared Christ to the Gentiles, and three thousand souls were at once added to his Church. The accomplishment



of this prophecy has been advancing ever since, by fresh accessions of converts from the Gentiles, and will, in the fulness of time, be completely realized, and we may well hope that it will yet, through the general conversion of the Jews, be more literally fulfilled. Archbishop Leighton, in a sermon on the 1st verse of this chapter, applies the text to the whole Church of Christ, yet speaks of it, thus, in reference to the Jews, “Undoubtedly the people of the Jews shall once more be commanded to *Arise and shine*, and their return shall be the riches of the Gentiles, and that shall be a more glorious time than ever the Church of Christ did yet behold. Nor is there any inconvenience, if we think that the high expressions of this prophecy have some spiritual reference to that time, since the great doctor of the Gentiles, (Rom. xi. 26.) applies some words of the former chapter (verse 20.) to that purpose. They forget,” adds he, “a main point of the Church’s glory, that pray not daily for the conversion of the Jews \*.”

The prophet proceeds, at the 6th verse, to say how “the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah, all they from Sheba,”—“the flocks of Kedar,” and “the rams of Nebaioth,”—the inhabitants of “the cities,” and “the ships of Tarshish,” shall all minister in this glorious work. And, at the 10th verse, adds, “And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee;” the kings of the heathen shall become Christians, and bring their wealth to the Church: “for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night: that men may bring

\* Works by Jerment, vol. iii. p. 131., quoted in Bickersteth’s Practical Remarks on the Prophecies, p. 22.



unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought." He then adds this awful warning, "For the nation and kingdom that will *not* serve thee shall perish ;—yea those nations shall be utterly wasted."

When one meditates upon these promises and threatenings, the happy consequences to arise from the fulfilment of them, and the evil arising from the sin of opposing them, one cannot but rejoice in the exertions which are now made to spread the knowledge of the Lord to the most remote and darkest corners ; and one cannot but say to all the *Societies* established to farther this great end, and to all individuals concerned in them, "We wish you prosperity in the name of the Lord ;" and one cannot but regret the silly differences, the jealousies and prejudices, as to *who* set them on foot, and *who* have cherished them, which prevent them all, or at least a great part of them, from uniting and augmenting their powers in the glorious and blessed work. And one cannot but wish, that such exertions should be NATIONAL ; that is, carried on by the united resources, influence and power of our chief rulers in Church and State \*. So would that part be fulfilled, beginning at the 16th verse, that the universal Church should be nourished by the milk of the Gentiles, and the fostering care of kings : "and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."—"I will make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness ;" or, rather, as the Greek interpreters have rendered it, "I will give thy princes in peace, and thy overseers," or

\* In this view, it would be a sanction and assistance, if Parliament were to grant a sum annually to the various Societies engaged in spreading the Word of God both at home and abroad.



bishops, "in righteousness\*." "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting, nor destruction, within thy borders: but thou shalt call thy walls salvation and thy gates praise."

And to private individuals it may be urged, that, when men become sincere Christians, they will readily consecrate their substance to the Lord. True religion enlarges the heart, subdues a narrow selfish spirit; and, where men find themselves backward to acts of *charity*, especially to the *souls* of men, and the support and furtherance of the Gospel, they have great reason to fear, that they are yet "strangers to the grace of God."

The LXIst chapter is a passage of peculiar interest. It begins, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me, to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord;" that is, the year of Jubilee, which was the appointment of the Lord, (Leviticus xxv. 9.) and very acceptable to the poor, as debts were then cancelled, slaves were released, and mortgaged estates restored; "and the day of vengeance of our God," of his righteous judgment upon his enemies; "to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty," or, a beautiful crown, "for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;"—this is an allusion to the manner of mourning among the Jews; they put on sackcloth, or coarse garments, and spread dust, or ashes, on their

\* See Wogan, Vol. I. p. 282.



heads, instead of oil ; (see 2 Sam. xiv. 2.) and, on the contrary, splendid clothing and ointment poured upon the head were signs of joy ;—and these changes were made, “ that,” as the prophet says, “ they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.”

The circumstance which gives this passage so much interest is, that our Lord, as we read in St. Luke, iv. 14, &c., after he had been baptized by John, and withstood the temptations of the devil, and wrought several miracles, “ returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee : and there went a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up : and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And, when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor ; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, *This day is this Scripture* fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.” We have Christ’s own word, then, that Isaiah, in this passage, spoke of *Him*.



In the remainder of this chapter and the following one, the prophet declares the return of the Jews to their own land in the latter day, and their prosperity in it.

While repeating these promises, the prophet's attention seems to be called off by an extraordinary appearance and stir, and he exclaims, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" that is, with an air of majesty, and not like one fatigued or wounded. The heroic warrior is then represented as answering, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Who can this be, then, but "The Lord our righteousness?" (Jerem. xxiii. 6. xxxiii. 16.) "The Lord of Hosts, our Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel?" (Isaiah xliii. 14. xlvii. 4.) The Edomites were the ancient and inveterate enemies of God's people, and are here put, probably, to represent his enemies at large. Bozrah was the capital city of Edom. But *Edom*, likewise, signifies *red*, and *Bozrah* signifies *vintage*, to which also, probably, the prophet alludes, in the question, which he next asks, "Wherefore art thou *red* in thine apparel," stained with *blood*, "and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?" The warrior, the Messiah, answers, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury," as easily and effectually as grapes are crushed by treading in a wine-press; "and my blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed," the time when they shall be redeemed, "is come. And I looked, and there was



none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me;" that is my zeal and concern for my people. "And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth."

This awful judgment relates to some event, probably, yet to come, and may be the same with that mentioned by Ezekiel, chapter xxxviii., and by St. John, in the Revelation, chapter xx., when Gog and Magog shall be destroyed, perhaps, by some immediate interference of God, by the Messiah, from heaven.

The prophet, then, the 7th, to the end of the 14th verse, in the person of the Church, breaks out into grateful acknowledgments of former favours, as an encouragement to hope for what is promised. And, at the 15th verse, begins a *prayer*, not only suitable to the Jews in their captivity in Babylon, but more especially in their present dispersion, and which is continued to the end of the following chapter.

The LXIVth chapter is the first lesson, at this evening's service, the fifth Sunday after the Epiphany. The Jews, continuing their *prayer*, say, "Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains would flow down at thy presence!" that is, Oh that God would look upon us, and shew himself as visibly in our favour, as he did to our fathers at mount Sinai, when there was such thunder and lightning as made the mountain look as if it were melting down; "As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil," or, when the fire makes the metals melt and the waters boil, "to make thy name known



to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence. When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for," in our deliverance from Egypt, and at mount Sinai, "thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. For,"—and now we begin those verses which I have selected for my text,—“since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him ;” or, as in the margin of our Bibles, “neither hath the eye seen a God besides thee, which doeth so for him that waiteth for him.” This speaks the unsearchable wisdom and grace of God in his scheme for the salvation of his people ; as if he had said, “Thou hast not yet done thy utmost, there is still more in reserve.”

St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 9., accommodates this remark to the Gospel dispensation, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,” to conceive, “the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,” because it revealed glorious things, which human wisdom could not discover ; and, in respect to the future state of the righteous, we can form no idea equal to what God intends for them.

The prophet proceeds in the prayer of the Jews, at the 5th verse, “Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness,” that is, thou meetest with thy favour, or with joy, him who, through faith, serveth thee, which, as to Abraham, thou countest unto him for righteousness, (Gen. xv. 6., Rom. iv. 3.) “those that remember thee in thy ways,” who observe and own thy providence, and regard thee in every merciful and afflictive event: “behold thou art wroth ; for we have sinned : in those is conti-



nuance, and we shall be saved ;” that is, in those ways of thine, especially thy ways of mercy, there is continuance, thy mercy is everlasting, therefore we shall be saved. “ But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses,” those actions which we sometimes are inclined to look upon with a favourable eye, and consider as good ; yet, when compared with God’s law, and his purity and goodness, they “ are as filthy rags \*,” loathsome in our sight ; “ and we all do fade as a leaf ; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away ;” that is, as the wind doth a withered leaf, thou hast driven us out of our land, and deprived us of good.

There is a passage in that admirable work, the *Private Thoughts* of the excellent *Bishop Beveridge*, so much to our purpose, that I will not forbear quoting a part of it, though time is pressing upon us. It is in the *Thoughts on Religion*, and the *IVth Article*, in which he says, “ I believe, that I was conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity ; and that, ever since, I have been continually conceiving mischief, and bringing forth vanity.” He, then, goes on to *prove* this position, “ This article of my faith I must of *necessity* believe, whether I will or no ; for, if I could *not* believe it to be *true*, I should *therefore* have the more cause to believe it to be so ;

\* That is, like “ a leprous garment, which, by God’s express command, was to be consigned to the flames.” “ See Levit. xiii. 47—58. but especially verse 55, where it was appointed, that, though the plague had not spread, or changed its colour, yet, if it had eaten off the knap from the cloth, the cloth was to be burned, because it was ‘ *fret inward*.’ So, though the whole conversation of a man be not polluted, or even *visibly* bad in any part, yet, if there be an inward disposition that is depraved, our great High Priest, when he shall inspect our hearts, will certainly pronounce us leprous, and execute the law upon us.” Simeon’s *Horæ Homil.* Vol. V. p. 494, 495.



because, unless my heart was *naturally* very sinful and corrupt, it would be impossible for me *not* to *believe* that which I have so much cause continually to *bewail*;" &c. \* \* \* \* "And, therefore, for my own part, I am resolved, by the Grace of God, never to go about to *confute* that by *wilful arguments*, which I find so true by woeful experience. If there be *not* a *bitter root* in my heart, whence proceeds so much *bitter fruit* in my *life* and *conversation*? Alas! I can neither set my head nor heart about any thing, but I still shew myself to be the sinful offspring of sinful parents, by being the sinful parent of a sinful offspring. Nay, I do not only betray the in-bred venom of my heart, by poisoning my common actions, but even my most *religious* performances, also, with sin. I cannot pray, but I sin;" that is, some sin gets mixed amongst it, and taints it; "I cannot hear, or preach a sermon, but I sin; nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my very confessions are still aggravations of them; my repentance needs to be repented of, my tears want washing, and the very washing of my tears, need still to be washed over again with the blood of my Redeemer. Thus, not only the *worst* of my *sins*, but even the *best* of my *duties*, speak me a child of Adam: insomuch, that, whensoever I reflect upon my past actions, methinks I cannot but look upon my whole life, from the time of my conception, to this very moment, to be but *as one continued act of sin*."

There is another passage, also, in the second part, in the *Thoughts upon Self-Denial*, where he is speaking of justification through the righteousness of Christ, which still more particularly applies to this passage in Isaiah, and from which, therefore, I will give you a short extract: "there is not the best ac-



tion that ever a mere mortal did, but, if examined by the strict rules of *justice*, it is as far from being *good*, yea, so far, that God himself may justly pronounce it *evil*, and, by consequence, condemn the person that did, for doing of it. And, therefore, I cannot but wonder what it is that any man doth, or can do, for which he can in reason expect to be justified before God, our very *righteousness* being, as the prophet tells, but *as filthy rags*, and our most holy performances fraught with sin and imperfection, and, therefore, so far from *justifying* us, that we may justly be condemned for them; but this mankind doth not love to hear of, the pride of our hearts being such, that, by all means, we must have something in ourselves whereof to glory before God himself. But woe be to that person who hath no other *righteousness* but *his own*, wherein to appear before the Judge of the whole world. For howsoever *specious* his actions may seem to *man*, they will be adjudged *sins* before the Eternal God."

Let *us*, then, my brethren, bewailing our multiplied and great sins, and renouncing our own *righteousnesses*, as of *no value*, and as even tainted with *sin*, turn ourselves to the Lord, and beseech him to cleanse us in the "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," (Zech. xiii. 1.) that he would "clothe us with the garments of salvation," and "cover us with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah lxi. 10.) of his blessed Son; that, when "the King" shall have "prepared" his "wedding dinner," and shall "come in to see his guests," we may be found in "wedding garments" and be welcomed to sit down with "the King" and "his Son."



## SERMON LXII.

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.—ISAIAH LXV, LXVI.

GOD FOUND OF THEM WHO SOUGHT HIM NOT—VARIOUS IDOLATRIES—A REMNANT ACCORDING TO ELECTION—GAD AND MENI—NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH—THE TEMPLE—HYPOCRISY EXPOSED—GLORY OF THE JEWS IN THE LATTER DAY—THE FIRE THAT SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED—PRAYER FOR THE CONVERSION OF ALL SINNERS.

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### ISAIAH LXV. 1—3.

*I am sought of them that asked not for me ; I am found of them that sought me not : I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts. A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face.*

THE first lessons for this day, the sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, are the LXVth and the LXVIth, that is, the last two chapters of Isaiah, and on Sunday last, I considered to the end of the LXIVth, so that our attention now is to be confined to these two, and which will end this book, and what I have to say, at present, upon the Old Testament ; except, that, on Sunday next, I purpose, from this *eminence*, as it were, to *look back* upon the ground we have passed over, and point out briefly in *one survey*, some of the most distinguished *prophecies* and *types* relating to CHRIST, which we have before noticed, *at intervals* in the course of our progress.



The LXVth chapter is an answer to the people's complaint in the foregoing one, of God's rejecting them; informing them, that it was for their sins, especially their rejecting of Christ, when the Gentiles received him; and it concludes with promises of their future restoration. It begins with the words which I have chosen for my text, "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not." St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, the ixth chapter, the 25th and following verses, and the xth chapter and the 20th verse, quotes and explains this, "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me;" that is, by the Gentiles, unto whom, though they were given up to idolatry, and did not seek after truth and Me, yet I manifested myself unto them by my Son, and my Spirit, and my apostles.

And is not this the case, too, with many in this day? While they are going on in their sins, regardless of him, he awakens and arrests them, by his word and his ministers, by friends, by his providences, by afflictions and sickness; till they turn to him, and seek and find Him whom they sought not before; so condescending, so gracious is God!

The prophet continues, "I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts;" after their corrupt doctrines and superstitious ways of worship; "A people that provoked me to anger continually to my face." He, then, states in what way it was, that they, "this people," provoked him: "That sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick."



The idolatry of sacrificing in gardens, probably, arose from an imitation of the place of abode of our first parents; and, being abused, the custom was forbidden; and sacrifices were, then, to be offered only at the Tabernacle, and, afterwards, at the Temple; and, so, likewise, no altar was to be made of any hewn materials, and incense was to be offered only upon the golden altar in the Temple.

The prophet goes on, “Which remain among the *graves*, and lodge in the *monuments*.” It may seem strange to you *how* they could do this, or *why* they should chuse such kind of lodgings. But, in those times and places, the dead were not buried in such graves as we commonly see in our churches and church-yards; but in a large *cave*, or cell, hewn out of a rock, in a garden, or other ground, belonging to the family of the deceased: or, if they had no such convenience, then in some common place of burial out of the town. We have several proofs of this in holy Scripture. I need mention but one, namely, the *sepulchre* wherein Christ was laid, which was a *cave* made in a rock, in a garden, spacious enough to hold several living men besides the dead corpse, as we learn from the appearance of two angels, and the entrance of two apostles into it after Christ’s resurrection. So that it was easy for those who had a mind to lodge and remain for a long time in such monuments. And the reason why some men chose to lodge in such places was, as they supposed, that, either by waking visions, or dreams in their sleep, they might have communication with the souls of the departed, and, by them, obtain a more-than-natural knowledge of things. One of the fathers of the Church \* tells us, that a people of *Libya*, and the

\* Tertullian De Anima, c. 57.



*Celtæ* waited at the graves of the deceased to learn their future success, or fortune, or of other secret things. This was a dark and horrid way of diving into mysteries : but the *curiosity* which some have of prying into their own, or their neighbours' fate, and their ambition to pass in the world for cunning men, who knew every thing, reconciled them to it.

Some of the means used by persons calling themselves Christians, in these days, in order, as they think, to come at a knowledge of future events, are not, probably, less offensive, but even more so, in the sight of God, as it is done in defiance of the clearer light of the Gospel \*.

The Jews were extremely prone to imitate the heathen in their infernal arts of necromancy, conjuration and witchcraft, and even to offer their children to devils for the obtaining of their assistance. Such practices were made capital crimes by the law of Moses, which ordains, Levit. xx. 27, that “a man, or woman, that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death : they shall stone them with stones, their blood shall be upon them.” And, again, Deut. xviii. 10., “There shall not be found among you any one that useth divination, or is an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination to the Lord : and because of these things the Lord thy God doth drive out the nations of Canaan from before thee †.”

The prophet proceeds, at verse 4, “which eat

\* For an account of some of the superstitions practised on St. Mark's Eve, on St. John's, on Midsummer, and on St. Agnes, see Time's Telescope for 1823, p. 91—93, and for 1826, p. 97, and 158.

† See Reading's Sermons, Vol. I. p. 161—163.



swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels." It is well known that the swine was considered an unclean animal and forbidden to the Jews ; but it may not be so obvious what is meant by "broth of abominable things." This means, probably, the "kid seethed in his mother's milk," mentioned Exod. xxiii. 19., and which was forbidden to the Jews ; as the heathens, previous to the vintage, used to take the broth of a kid, boiled in the milk of its dam, and sprinkle the vineyards as an offering to the deity who they thought presided over them \*.

And, in consequence of these superstitious observances, they set themselves up, and said, "Stand by thyself, come not near to me ; for I am holier than thou." But God says of them, "These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day ;" they are offensive, as the smoke of wet wood. "Behold it is written before me," I will not forget it : "I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord, which have burnt incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills : therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom ;" that is, I will take both their former and their latter sins into account, when I come to punish them as a nation.

Nevertheless there shall be a remnant according to the election of grace : for, "Thus saith the Lord, as the new wine," or, rather, a good grape, "is found in the cluster, and one saith, destroy it not, for a blessing is in it : so will I do for my servants' sakes,

\* See an Essay on the Agriculture of the Israelites, in the Investigator, Vol. VI, p. 48.



that I may not destroy them all;" as, when a man who is pruning a vine, and cutting out the dead branches, sees a cluster likely to ripen, he leaves it, saying, these will become good grapes; so some of the Jews shall be converted, and some of the unbelievers shall be spared, in hope that a better generation will rise out of them: as it follows; "And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me."

God, then, returns to his reproofs of the Jews for their idolatry, and his denunciations in consequence, "But ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that *troop*, and that furnish the drink-offering unto that *number*." This is not very intelligible; but we are told by a learned commentator, that the Hebrew of the words rendered here *troop* and *number* is *Gad* and *Meni*, which some interpreters explain of the two heathen deities *Fortune* and *Mercury*, which the Jews, as well as Gentiles, were wont to consult concerning the event of their affairs; but the "vagabond Jews" grew, afterwards, notorious to a proverb for their pretence to judicial astrology, and telling of fortunes; and, as the word *Meni* signifies, likewise, *number*, as in the words written by the hand upon the wall before Belshazzar, (Daniel v. 26.); God, here, to deter them from the impious practice, (these "curious arts," as they are called, Acts xix. 19.) *playing*, as it is called *upon the word MENI*, says he will *number* them to the *sword*; and, thereby, convince them, to their cost, that their *fortune*, and



whole success depend solely on HIS WILL AND PLEASURE\*.

At the 17th verse God says, "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind;" that is, the final conversion of the Jews shall be a new and glorious state of things, superior to any there has been before. "But, be glad and rejoice for ever," or, for the age to come, "in that which I create: for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." He goes on, setting forth the prosperity of the Jews, in images drawn from earthly blessings, and, in the 22d verse, says, "as the days of *a tree* are the days of my people." Some commentators explain this as meaning only, "They shall revive as a tree does in the spring †." While others understand it, as applying to what is called *The Millennium*, or the expected reign of Christ upon earth, with his saints, for *a thousand years*, the common duration of an *oak tree* being said to be *a thousand years* ‡.

At the 25th verse, the same image is repeated, which was given in the xith chapter, the 6th, to the end of the 9th verse, "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock:" but the image is changed in respect to *the serpent*, and it is said, "And dust shall be the serpent's meat," which Bishop Sherlock understands as referring to the sentence on the serpent at the fall, that *Satan* shall be subdued and bound, be stripped of his influence over the souls of men, and

\* See Wogan, Vol. IV. p. 610, Note.

† Orton, Vol. V. p. 391.

‡ See Wogan, Vol. IV. p. 612, Note.



the curse of God executed upon him and his seed \*. It is added, "They shall not hurt, nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord ;" there shall be no persecution, nor severity among them, but perfect friendship and harmony.

The LXVIth chapter is a continuation of the subject of the foregoing. The Jews valued themselves much upon their *Temple*, and the splendid system of services performed in it, which they supposed were to be of perpetual duration ; and they assumed great confidence and merit to themselves for their strict observance of all the outward forms of their religion. And, at the very time that the judgments denounced in the 6th and 12th verses of the former chapter, were hanging over their heads, they were rebuilding, or, rather, repairing, the temple, by Herod's munificence, in a most magnificent manner. God, by his prophet, admonishes them, that "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands," that is, as he, here, expresses it, that "the heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool ;" and it is in this sense, that St. Stephen quotes this passage, in Acts vii. 49, 50, before the high-priest. And Isaiah assures them, that a mere outward worship, how diligently soever attended, when accompanied by wicked and idolatrous practices in the worshippers, would never be accepted by him. This their hypocrisy is set forth in strong colours ; which brings him again to the subject of the former chapter ; and he pursues it in a different manner, with more express declaration of the new system, and of the flourishing state of the Church under it. The increase of the Church is to be

\* See Orton, Vol. V. p. 391.



sudden and astonishing. This chapter, as well as the former, relates, in the first instance, to the calling of the Gentiles, the establishment of the Christian dispensation, and the reprobation of the apostate Jews, and their destruction executed by the Romans; but it has a farther view to the triumph of the Church in the latter days.

At the 3d verse, our translation says, "he that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man," but it should rather have been translated, "He that slayeth an ox killeth a man;" that is, "He that offereth an ox to me in sacrifice, does not scruple to kill a man, or be a murderer." And in a like manner we should understand the other instances, "he that sacrificeth a lamb, beheadeth a dog; he that offereth an oblation, offereth swine's blood; he that burneth incense, blesseth an idol;" that is, he who pretends to honour me with sacrifices and oblations, is, at the same time, guilty of the grossest idolatry\*. He, then, adds, "Yea they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I, also, will chuse their delusions," they shall be slaves to tradition, and will be deluded by false Christs; "and will bring their fears upon them;" that is, what they most fear and try to avoid, that I will bring upon them, the power of the Romans, for fear of whom they crucified Christ; because, when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.

At the 5th verse he addresses those "that tremble at his word;" and, at the 7th verse, begins to set forth the glorious state of the Jews in the latter day.

\* See Lowth, p. 171, and Notes, p. 279.



At the 15th verse, the destruction of those enemies is denounced, who shall come to attack the Jews after their settlement, supposed to be the Tartars and other barbarous and idolatrous nations from the north: “For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For, by fire and by his sword, will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine’s flesh, and the abomination and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord, for I know their works and their thoughts.”

What is here translated “behind one tree,” Bishop Lowth translates, “after the rites of Achad;” that is an image of *the sun* in the garden of *Achad*, called *One*, or *The One Great Being*, a name given him by the ancient Persians, who used to sacrifice seven *bats* and seven *mice* to the *sun* \*.

The prophet, at the 18th verse, speaking from God, says, “It shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory,” which shall be displayed in converting the Jews, and in destroying their enemies. “And I will set a sign,” or standard, “among them; and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the Isles afar off that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and *they* shall declare my glory among the *gentiles*. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord.”

\* See Lowth, p. 173, and Notes, p. 280, and Orton, Vol. v. p. 395.



This was fulfilled, in its first sense, or measure, when many of the Jews were converted to the Gospel, and then preached it to the Gentiles, especially the great apostle of the Gentiles, as St. Paul says of himself, Rom. xv. 15, 16., “Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you, in some sort as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” But it will be fulfilled in a still-more-full and striking manner, when the present scattered tribes of Israel shall be converted, and become, in their turns, preachers of the Gospel to the nations among which they are dispersed and to every nation of the earth: for it, here, says, “They shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord,” that is, I will bring them in an expeditious, easy and convenient manner, and take care that they be well accommodated upon their journey\*. “And I will, also, take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord;” the Jews shall again become a kingdom of priests, and take pains to spread the Gospel. “For, as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed

\* Upon this most interesting subject, see several, both skeletons, and full discourses, in Simeon’s *Horæ Homileticæ*, particularly, Vol. v. N. 500. 539. 546.



and your name remain ;” this new state of things shall continue, and the Jews, when converted, shall remain to the end a faithful people. “And it shall come to pass, that, from one new moon to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.” The worship under the Gospel is described by these figures ; as if he had said, The stated seasons of worship shall be regularly attended, yea they shall keep one continued festival, and be habitually devout and holy.

The prophet concludes his commission from God in these awful words, “And they shall go forth,” that is, from Jerusalem, “and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me ;” they shall see their enemies slain, as was described at the 16th verse, “for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched ; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”

These words of the prophet, “for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched,” are applied by our blessed Saviour, Mark ix. 44, to express the everlasting punishment of the wicked in *Gehenna*, or in *hell*. *Gehenna*, or the valley of *Hinnom*, or *Tophet*, was very near to Jerusalem : it was the place where the idolatrous Jews celebrated that horrible rite of making their children pass through the fire, that is, of burning them in sacrifice to Moloch. To put a stop to this abominable practice, the good king Josiah “defiled” the place, by filling it with human bones, (2 Kings xxiii. 10—14.) and, probably, it was the custom, afterwards, to throw out the carcasses of animals there ; and it became the common burying-place for the poorer people of Jerusalem. Our Lord represented the state of *the blessed* by



images to which our senses were accustomed, such as *paradise* and *Abraham's bosom*, or, which is the same thing, a place to recline near to Abraham, at table, in the kingdom of heaven, (Matt. viii. 11., Luke xvi. 23., John xiii. 23.) For we could not possibly have any idea of it, but by *comparison* with objects of *this world*. In like manner, he expressed the place of torment under the image of *Gehenna*; and the punishment of the wicked, by *the worm* which there preyed upon the carcasses, and *the fire* which consumed the wretched victims. He marks, however, in the strongest manner, the *difference* between *Gehenna* and *the unknown place of torment*; namely, that, in the former, there is an *end* of the suffering; *the worm* itself, that preys on the body, *dies*; and *the fire*, which burns it to ashes can be *quenched*; whereas, in the *unknown Gehenna*, the instruments of punishment shall be *everlasting*, and the suffering *without end*; for *there* "the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Here is, my brethren, abundant scope for our serious meditation, our fervent prayers, and our most strenuous exertions; and I know not that we can do better than to conclude in the words of one of the Collects of our Church for Good-Friday:

"O merciful God, who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that thou hast made, nor wouldest the death of a sinner, but, rather, that he should be converted and live,—Have mercy upon all Jews," Gentiles, "Turks, Infidels and Hereticks; and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy Word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold



under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth, with Thee and the Holy Spirit, One God, world without end." Amen, Amen.

And to whom be ascribed, as is most due, all honour, and glory and praise, might, majesty and dominion, now and ever.



## SERMON LXIII.

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CONCLUSION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT—THE WITNESS OF ALL  
THE SCRIPTURES TO CHRIST.

THE WALK TO EMMAUS—THE SEED OF THE WOMAN PROMISED—  
THE LAMB SLAIN—THE CALL OF ABRAHAM—THE SACRIFICE  
OF ISAAC — JOSEPH — SHILOH — THE PASCHAL LAMB — THE  
BRAZEN SERPENT—THE STAR OF JACOB—THE PROPHET—  
DAVID—SOLOMON—JONAH—THE PROPHETS—PRAYER FOR  
MINISTERS—AND FOR GRACE.

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LUKE XXIV. 27.

*And, beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto  
them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself.*

I. HAVING gone through the course of sermons which I proposed, as far as relates to the Old Testament, according to the course of the first Sunday lessons, at morning and evening service, explaining and applying what appeared to me to be of most importance, and, particularly, what relates to Christ,—it seems advisable, before we close the book for the present, to *look back*, and, at one view, but as briefly as may be, to consider those *prophecies* and *types*, which are the *very essence* of the Bible, and were intended to introduce the Christ, the Messiah, the Holy One of Israel, our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. The words of my text are a part of a very remarkable occurrence. On the day on which our Lord arose from the dead, two of the disciples were



travelling on foot from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a village between seven and eight miles distant, and were discoursing of the events which had taken place, when one,—apparently a stranger, but, in reality, Jesus himself,—drew near, and joined them, and asked, what was the subject of their earnest conversation, and the cause of their sorrowful looks? They told him of what had happened to Jesus, how he had been put to death, that he had been buried in a sepulchre, that certain persons had gone to look that day for his body, and had not found it, and that certain angels there had said that he was *alive*: but these disciples intimated *doubts*, and expressed their *disappointment* in him, as they had “trusted that it had been *He* which should have redeemed Israel;” that is, they had expected, that he would have taken upon himself the character of a great worldly prince and conqueror, and have rescued Israel from their subjection to the Romans; and they were quite confounded by his sufferings and death. On this, the stranger “said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And, beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.” He shewed, from the Scriptures, that Christ was to *suffer*, as well as to *triumph*; to suffer *first*, but, finally, to triumph in glory: and, that this was not intimated obscurely, but that it was a conspicuous and striking feature in the five books of “Moses,” in “all the Prophets,” and in “all the Scriptures.” To trace this, then, as far as the time will allow, is my present object.

II. 1. The first two chapters of Genesis set forth,



what could not have been known, but by the gracious revelation of God, an account of the creation of this world which we inhabit, and of the placing our first parents in the garden of Eden, with every thing for their support, use and pleasure, and all animals in subjection to them, with this *one only exception*, that of the fruit of *one particular tree*, called *the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* they were *not* to eat. What could be more *bountiful*, what could be more *reasonable*, all earthly things at their disposal, *excepting one*, and that denied by the God of all power, all wisdom, all goodness?

Yet, the *iii*d chapter informs us, that this gracious command was *disobeyed*. The tempter, Satan, the Devil, in the form, or by means of the serpent, told them that the fruit of the tree was desirable and good, and that, if they eat of it, no evil consequences would ensue, but good. They eat. They had, indeed, acquired *knowledge of good and evil*. Knowledge of *good*,—of exquisite, heavenly good,—*lost*; and of *evil*—oh! what unutterable evil—incurred! Think of all the sin, all the misery which has taken place in the world, from that moment to this—and of all that will take place, in this world, to the end of time,—and of all the misery of the unregenerate children of Adam in hell to all eternity, and *that* is the *consequence* of that transgression of our first parents. And the sin and misery would have been *greater*,—infinitely greater,—had not the same all-gracious God, who had formed so goodly a world, and such goodly creatures, devised a way to REDEEM it, and to magnify his name by his justice and mercy. God pronounced this curse upon the *serpent*, or upon *Satan* in the serpent, that, though he had bruised, and would *bruise* the *heel* of man, yet THE



SEED OF THE WOMAN SHOULD BRUISE THE SERPENT'S HEAD; and, under this promise, our first parents were driven from paradise into the wide world, now under the curse of bringing forth thorns and thistles to make *labour* for man, one punishment of his disobedience.

2. Our first parents “kept these things in their hearts,” for, when Eve “bare Cain,” she said, “I have gotten a man from the Lord;” (iv. 1.) hoping that *this was the seed* that was to *bruise the serpent's head*. But, alas! it proved quite otherwise, the serpent “bruised his heel” woefully, and he became the murderer of his brother. In the history of Cain and Abel, we learn that Abel offered “a sacrifice” to God of “the firstlings of his flock,” or a *lamb*. It is not *said* in the ivth chapter of Genesis that this sacrifice was the appointment of God, nor yet what was the precise object of it; but, considering the whole Scripture history in connection, and viewing things not said to have been appointed, together with those professedly appointed, and it is highly probable, that the offering of Abel, the sacrifice of Isaac, the paschal lamb, the lamb of daily sacrifice, were but different representations of “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” (Rev. xiii. 8.) “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John i. 29.)

3. In the short account of long ages which ensued, we hear nothing more of *the promise*; the earth became “filled with violence” (vi. 11.), so wicked, that God determined to destroy “all flesh” by a universal flood, except the righteous Noah and his family, his wife, and three sons and their wives, whom he preserved in an ark. From these the earth was again peopled, and, even from among these, sin again arose, till wickedness and idolatry almost overspread the



face of the earth. We hear, indeed, at *Salem* of “a king of righteousness” and “priest of the Most High God” (Gen. xiv. 18., Heb. vii. 1.); but Joshua tells *us*, that is, in his address to the children of Israel, (xxiv. 2.), “Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood,” that is, of the great river Euphrates, “in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and they *served other gods.*” But Jehovah, in his gracious purpose of redemption, determined to select a peculiar people to himself, to preserve his name and his worship, and from whom the Redeemer should spring. He, accordingly, made himself known to Abraham, and ordered him to leave his father’s house, and his kindred, and his country; and to travel to, and sojourn in, a country which he would shew him, and which should, afterwards, be the possession of the multitude of his seed. Abraham obeyed the call, taking with him his wife Sarah, Lot his brother’s son, and servants and cattle; and God led him into the land of Canaan. A famine arising here, he went, for a subsistence, into Egypt, where he was enriched by the king; and returning into Canaan, his own flocks and herds, and those of Lot had increased so much, that, it being difficult to find pasture to maintain them all together, disputes arose among their herdsmen, and Abraham and Lot agreed to part, Lot taking his choice, and chusing the well-watered and fertile plain of Sodom as his fixed abode. God, now, promised Abraham this land as the possession of his posterity; but he had as yet no child, and his wife was advanced in years; A SON, however, was given, from whom this multitude was to arise; but, when he was arrived at man’s estate, God called upon Abraham to offer him up AS A BURNT SACRIFICE to Him. Here, indeed, was *a trial*. He is called



upon to slay in sacrifice, his only son, the miraculous offspring of their old age, and from whom the multitude was to proceed. But it is Jehovah who orders it, he who had created all things, who had promised that “the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head,” who had preserved Noah and his family, when he drowned the rest of the world, and who had promised him a numerous posterity,—HE orders; and Abraham,—full of faith, though not seeing *how* it could be, yet, “against hope, believeth in hope,” and—resolves to *obey*. The altar is made, the wood is laid upon it, the consenting son is bound, the fatal knife is grasped, and is held up to fall in death:—Abraham’s faith is proved. The voice of the angel of God orders him to forbear, and a ram is ready to be substituted in the place of his son; and Abraham is assured, that in his “seed” should “all the nations of the earth be blessed:” that is, as it was understood, from him should arise that “seed of the woman” who was to “bruise the serpent’s head,” and be a blessing to all the nations of the earth. Now, let us consider farther a few of the circumstances connected with this. It seems a long time from the creation, and *fall*, whenever that might happen, to this transaction, even about 2133 years; but, then, the age of man, at that time, was nearer to 1000 years, than it is, with us, to 100; and there were only *three* intermediate persons, (as I mentioned in a former Discourse—Sermon V. for Septuagesima Sunday—) to convey the revelation and the promise from Adam to Abraham. *Methuselah* was 340 years old when Adam died; Methuselah lived till the year of the flood, when *Noah* was 600 years old; and *Shem*, the son of Noah, and ancestor of Abraham, and to whose family the *promise* and *blessing* was assured, (Genesis ix.



25—27.) survived the flood 500 years, past the offering of Isaac, and even to the latter end of the life of Abraham, who was ninth in descent from him. Nor are we to conceive of Abraham as an obscure person, travelling about with his wife and child, and living in a tent. He was a *great* man, a prince; and, with his numerous attendants, and flocks, and herds, and camels, and asses, though living in *tents*, must, in those days, have made a great appearance. For, when the four confederate kings, made an incursion upon the five kings of the plain of Sodom, and took Lot and his goods, Abraham armed his trained servants, 318 in number, and rescued Lot. But, besides these, there must have been others left in charge with Sarah and the women, and the flocks and herds. So that THE OFFERING OF ISAAC was the distinguished act of a distinguished man; and, in the promise to our first parents, and in this sacrifice, and the promise in consequence to Abraham, it was, no doubt, that, as our blessed Lord said to the Jews, (John viii. 56.) “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.”

5. I must not dwell upon the history of JOSEPH, his being hated and sold by his brethren, his being “taken from prison and from judgment,” (Isa. liii. 8.) and exalted to the highest honours.

6. The prophetic blessing of JACOB to his children, upon his death-bed, in Egypt, declaring what should happen to their posterity, when settled in the promised land, requires a particular notice, at least in that part which relates to JUDAH. Jacob says, “Judah thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise,” thy tribe shall be famous for the royal dignity belonging to it, and the Messiah’s coming out of it; “thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies:



thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp ; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up : he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion ; who shall rouse him up ?" Then follows the great promise of the Messiah from him, " The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet," from his posterity, " until SHILOH come," until the promised MESSIAH shall be sent. It shall be a distinct tribe, judged by its own laws, and not dispersed, till Christ shall come ; " and unto *him* shall the gathering of the people be ;" some of all nations, both Jews and Gentiles, shall yield obedience to Christ, acknowledging him for their Lord and Saviour, even at his first coming ; and, finally, all nations shall confess and bow down to him.

7. THE LAMB killed at the PASSOVER in Egypt is another very remarkable type. If the lamb slain by Abel, and, probably, also by Adam, was a type of " the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," (John i. 29.) and which was remarkably renewed in Isaac, slain in intention, and the ram-lamb actually slain in his stead ;—in *the paschal lamb* fresh circumstances were added, " a bone was not to be broken," (Exod. xii. 46. Numb. ix. 12. Psalm xxxiv. 20.) and the blood sprinkled upon the lintel and side posts of the doors of the houses, was a sign to the destroying angel, that he was to *pass over* wherever that *blood* was *applied* in *faith*.

8. At the xxist chapter of the book of Numbers is the important account of the setting up of the BRAZEN SERPENT. The Israelites had been supported in the wilderness by a daily supply of *manna* showered down to them from heaven, and by a miraculous stream of water issuing from a rock and attending



upon them : but, as they journied from mount Hor, they were “ much discouraged, because of ” the length and heat of “ the way,” they loathed the manna, because it was a light food, and they had been long accustomed to it, and the water failed. What did the people ? resort to Moses, and intreat him to pray to God for them, and offer up humble and fervent prayers themselves ? This would have been the proper and the obvious mode of proceeding. But, being a perverse and rebellious people, they “ spake against God and against Moses, wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness ? ” — “ And the Lord sent fiery *serpents* among the people, and they bit the people ; and much people of Israel died.” Now, what have we here ? What was the *sin* of the people ? Distrust, murmuring and rebellion ; and this, no doubt, the suggestion of the *old serpent*, the devil, though he does not *appear* as the instigator. *The serpent*, however, between whom and man, is so much “ enmity,” was made the *scourge*, and was sent to “ bruise the heel ” of the disobedient. The wound was burning, and mortal, and much people perished. The *rod* was doing its work of vengeance and correction, for “ the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee ; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.” And *did* the Lord *take away* the serpents ? No. Mark *what* the Lord did : he “ said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole : and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, *when he looketh upon it*, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole : and it came to pass, that, if a serpent had



bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." And was this what we should call a *natural remedy* for the disease? Quite the contrary. *We* have no very venomous serpents in *this country*: but, supposing a person had been bitten by a *mad dog*, would it tend to cure his actual, or expected disease, by exhibiting the likeness of a rabid dog before his eyes? No, it would tend to inflame the imagination, and promote the malady. And, so, probably, would the brazen serpent have affected the people, had this been a mere human suggestion; but the God of health and life ordained it as a remedy; it was the will of God appointed it, and the faith of the patient was to make it effectual. He who *disbelieved*, he who looked *not*, perished under the bite of the serpent. No mention is made of any *thanks* returned to God; it is not said, that any one asked, What may this wonderful transaction *mean*? That it *was thought of*, however, and for a long time, and that as a wonderful event, but to a *bad* purpose, we learn, afterwards, in the reign of Hezekiah, upwards of seven hundred years; for it was made an idol, and "the children of Israel burnt incense to it," till Hezekiah, in his piety, to prevent a farther abuse of it, destroyed it.

Our blessed Lord, however, has told us, what was the true intent and *meaning* of it,—John iii. 14—16.; —it was a type of *Himself*, that is of Himself, when, upon the cross, he represented the *old serpent*, or *sin*, for which he suffered, to free us from the power of Satan and sin, to give us life: "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten



Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And, again, John xii. 32, 33, "I, if I be *lifted up from the earth*, will draw all men unto me." On which St. John observes, in his own person, "This he said, signifying what *death* he should die." St. Peter says,—1 Ep. ii. 24.,—that he "bare our sins in his own body on the tree; that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness." And St. Paul, Col. ii. 14., that he "blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." Zechariah had said, xii. 10., in the person of God, or, rather, the Messiah, "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication: and they shall *look upon me whom they have pierced*, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." And *this* was fulfilled, we are told by St. John, xix. 34—37, when the soldier pierced the side of our blessed Lord, as he hung upon the cross, and the whole assembly round, friends and enemies, *looked upon him*. He it is unto whom we are to *look*, as St. Paul directs, Heb. xii. 2, "the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

9. We must not leave unnoticed the illustrious prophecy of the STAR OF JACOB. When Israel was encamped in the plains of Moab, ready to pass over Jordan and take possession of the promised land, the king of Moab sent for the famous prophet Balaam to *curse* the people, that he might encounter and



overcome them. But, when the sacrifices had been offered to Baal, and the king and people waited with anxiety to hear the curse, Jehovah over-ruled the prophet's tongue, and he was constrained to say, "How shall I curse, whom God hath *not* cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath *not* defied?" And, in declaring what should happen to the nations, he said, "There shall come A STAR out of Jacob, and A SCEPTRE shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth." And *who* could this be, but "Jesus"—"the bright and morning STAR?" (Rev. xxii. 16.) Of the SCEPTRE, of whose rule there was to be no end? (Isaiah ix. 7.)

10. And he is not only a king, but a PROPHET, also. Moses said, Deut. xviii. 15., "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee A PROPHET from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto *me*, unto Him ye shall hearken." He was like Moses, not only as a Prophet, but, also, as a Lawgiver, and a Mediator; and, when Christ came, Philip said to Nathaniel, John i. 45., "We have found Him of whom Moses, in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (See also Acts iii. 22., vii. 37.)

11. DAVID was born at Bethlehem in Judea, above 1000 years before Christ. He was, in his sufferings, a type of the suffering, and, in his accession to the throne of Israel, of the triumphant, Messiah. So particular are the Psalms of David in their application to Christ, that many of the circumstances are only *figuratively* true of David which are *literally* true of Christ.

12. In SOLOMON, the son of David, the Prince of a Peaceful reign, we have a type of Him, who was



emphatically, “The Prince of Peace,” (Isaiah ix. 6.) because, when his kingdom shall fully prevail, all will be *peace*, and *harmony*, and LOVE.

13. In the case of the prophet JONAH, we have some truly remarkable circumstances. He was ordered by God to go to the sinful people of Nineveh, and to cry out against them for their sins. He disobeyed God, and tried to fly away from him, and went on board a ship. A violent storm arose, so that the ship and crew were in the utmost danger. In this extremity, it being supposed that some one peculiar sinner was on board, on whose account the tempest was sent, they agreed to cast lots, to see who it was; and the lot fell upon Jonah. On which he declared his sin, and desired to be thrown overboard for the safety of the vessel. A large fish received him into his mouth; and, after continuing in his belly *three days and three nights*, the fish cast the prophet alive upon the dry land. Our Lord himself declared to the Scribes and Pharisees, that *this* was typical and prophetic of Himself; for, when they asked him for *a sign*, or miracle, “he said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas; for, as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matt. xii. 39, 40.) *This* was the principal circumstance of the resemblance, and it was truly wonderful. Let us not, however, consider this, as what is called an *insulated fact*, or an *event by itself*, but as a *link* in the *chain* of the history of that wonderful people the Israelites. Their whole economy was wonderful and typical; their sacrifices, their ceremonies, their prophets, their kings. A prophet from the land



of Israel is sent to Nineveh, then the greatest kingdom of the earth, with a threat of destruction. The prophet is afraid, he flies, the ship is tossed in a tremendous tempest, he is thrown overboard for the safety of the ship, he is swallowed by a great *fish*: and, surely, it would be thought, there is an end of him! *Our mariners* have witnessed many a man being swallowed by a great fish; but who ever knew one returned to life from its belly? None. Yet, here, after three days and three nights, he is returned safe to the land. Well might Israel, when they heard of it, say, “What can this *mean*?” Well might the people of Nineveh, when he preached repentance among them, and they heard his story, have exclaimed, *Who* may this be? *What* may this be? They “repented at the preaching of Jonah.” But, when “a greater than Jonah” (Matt. xii. 41.) preached repentance to the Jews, they repented *not*. He was made *a sacrifice for the safety of the crew*. He was put to death, bearing the sins of all; he was “three days and three nights in the grave;” and, on the third day, the grave could no longer hold him, but delivered him up alive and unhurt. “The sign of the prophet Jonas,” truly, ought to have carried with it great consideration to the Jews.

14. The time will not allow me to enter fully into the predictions of what are usually styled *the prophets*; but it is necessary to touch upon them briefly. We have, already, seen, that “the seed of the woman,” in whom “all the nations of the earth” were to be “blessed,” was to arise from the descendants of *Abraham*, and the tribe of *Judah*. The prophet Micah repeats, (v. 2.) that he is to be born in *Bethlehem*, as David had said before. (Psalm cxxxii. 6.) Isaiah says, that he is to proceed from *a virgin* (vii.



14.) ; and, though he is to be mighty, and glorious, (Isaiah ii. iv. ix. xl. xlii. lx. lxiii.) and to do many wonderful and beneficent acts, as to cure their diseases and infirmities, (Isaiah liii. 4. Matthew viii. 17.) to open the ears of the deaf, and the eyes of the blind, to make the dumb to speak, and the lame to leap ; (Isaiah xxix. 18. xxxv. 5, 6.) Yet he was to be “ despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” (liii. 3.) to “ give his back to the smiters,” (l. 6.) be “ numbered with the transgressors,” and to “ make his grave with the wicked and the rich.” David foretold the particulars, that they would give him “ gall” and “ vinegar” in his “ misery,” (Psalm lxix. 51.) ; and Zechariah that he should enter Jerusalem upon an ass, (ix. 9.) ; be sold for thirty pieces of silver, (xi. 12.) ; and be pierced, (xii. 10.) : and David, farther, foretold that his murderers should part his garments among them, and cast lots for his vesture. (Psalm xxii. 18.)

The prophet Daniel, about 500 years before hand, declared the *time*, the *year*, in which the Messiah should come, “ seventy weeks” says he (ix. 24.) “ are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to *anoint* the Most Holy ;” —and the beginning of these 70 weeks is said to be “ at the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.” These *weeks* are *prophetic* weeks, or weeks of *years*, a *year* for a *day*, or 490 years ; at the end of which the Messiah was to come, and to accomplish the redemption of mankind. A difference of opinion prevails, as to the time from which we are to *begin* to calculate this period ; but



all agree in fixing the *conclusion* of it *near* to the time of our Saviour's death.

III. Such, then, is the *full, minute, and wonderful* testimony, which "all the Scriptures" give to JESUS CHRIST. "To Him" indeed "give *all the prophets* witness," and we see how *dangerous* it is to rest in a slight, or partial, consideration of the Word of God. When the wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, to inquire, "Who is *he* who is born king of the Jews?" and Herod asked the chief priests and scribes *where* Christ was to be born, and they told him, "in *Bethlehem* of Judea;" had they, afterwards, when Jesus laid claim to be acknowledged as the Messiah, but searched the Scriptures as faithfully, to see whether these things were so, and been *willing* to have received him; then might they, with Philip, have said, "We have found him, of whom Moses, in the law, and the prophets did write." But they had confined their attention to but *one* part of the character of the Messiah, that of a *mighty prince and conqueror*; they looked for him, who was to come "from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah,—glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength;"—treading his enemies in his anger, and trampling them in fury,—and bringing down their strength to the earth. (See Isaiah lxiii. 1—6.) They would not consider, that he was, *first*, to "grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground," that he was to have "no form, nor comeliness," and "no beauty that we should desire him;"—(Isaiah liii. 1, 2.) that he was not to "cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets,"—that he would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; and would bring forth judgment unto truth: (see Isaiah xlii. 2, 3.) that, in



short, he was to be “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” (See Isaiah liii. 3.)

Let it be *our* care, then, not to be “fools and slow in heart,” either to search, or “to believe, all that the prophets have written;” but to await, in diligence and patience, “the” final “consolation of Israel,” (Luke ii. 25.); and, in order to assist us in this, let us pray of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, as, at his first coming, he did send his Messenger to prepare his way before him; so, he will grant that the ministers and stewards of his mysteries may, likewise, so prepare and make ready his way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; that, at his second coming to judge the world, we may be found an acceptable people in his sight.

And “O Lord, raise up, we pray thee, thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that, whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us, through the satisfaction of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end\*.” Amen.

\* Collects for the 3d and 4th Sundays in Advent.



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Let it be our care, then, not to be "fools and slow in heart," either to search, or to believe, all that the prophets have written; but to await, in silence and patience, "the final" "consolation of Israel" (Luke ii. 25. 12) and, in order to assist in this, let us pray to our Lord Jesus Christ, that, as he has come, he did send his messengers to prepare his way before him: so, he will grant that the ministers and stewards of his mysteries may, likewise, so prepare and make ready his way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; that, at his second coming to judge the world, we may be found an acceptable people in his sight.

And "O Lord, raise up, we pray thee, thy power, and come among us, and with great light comfort us; that, whosoever through our sins and wickedness we are sore led and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy heavenly grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us through the intercession of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end." Amen.

\* Collect for the 24th and 25th Sundays in Advent.



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OF THE

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OCCASIONALLY ILLUSTRATED, OR QUOTED,

*and not to be found by the running Title of the Books and Chapters.*

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THE END.



























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